

TOP STORY

HAPPY HOLI

3 DELHI

In meeting on pollution Delhi CM Gupta outlines plans for clean green city

5 STATE

CM Saini accuses Cong of telling lies running away when confronted with truth

7 NATIONAL

India announces USD 1 billion fund for creators' economy ahead of WAVES summit

8 STATE

CM Dhama celebrates Holi milan with folk artists, showcases rich cultural heritage

9 BUSINESS

RBI to Set Up 'On Tap' Cohort on Climate Change Risks

11 SPORTS

Union Sports Ministry puts Draft National Code Against Age Fraud in Sports

MARKET	
SENSEX	NIFTY
73828.91	22397.20
-200.85	-73.30
GOLD SILVER	
87,636.00	100,957.00
950.00	1,481.00

WEATHER

Sunrise	6:33 AM
Sunset	6:29 PM
Moonrise	6:39 PM
Moonset	6:56 AM

Today's Prediction	
Maximum	Minimum
33°C	20°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
31°C	20°C

Putin says Russia 'agrees' with US ceasefire proposal for Ukraine

■ The Russian president said that the idea is correct, but there are issues that needs to be discussed with Americal colleagues and partners.

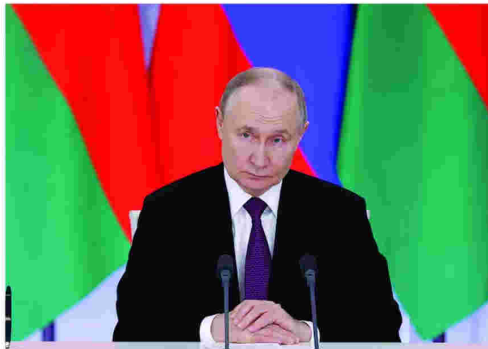
Moscow
Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that he agrees in principle for a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine, but the terms need to be worked out, and he emphasized that it should pave the way to lasting peace.

"So the idea itself is correct, and we certainly support it," Putin told a news conference in Moscow. "But there are issues that we need to discuss it with our American colleagues and partners."

He noted that Ukrainian troops are encircled in their last foothold in Russia's Kursk region, and it's necessary to determine before a ceasefire whether they will lay down weapons and surrender.

He said he will decide the "next steps" based on his forces' success in kicking Ukrainian troops out of the Kursk border region.

Putin hailed troops who have made rapid gains there in recent



days, before saying: "Based on how the situation on the ground develops, we will agree on the next steps in ending the conflict and reaching agreements acceptable to all."

He also noted the need to develop a mechanism to control possible breaches of the truce. Another issue, he said, is whether Ukraine could use the 30-day ceasefire

to continue mobilization and rearmament. "We agree with the proposals to halt the fighting, but we proceed from the assumption that the ceasefire should lead to lasting peace and remove the root causes of the crisis," Putin said.

Putin noted that while it appeared that the U.S. persuaded Ukraine to accept a ceasefire, Ukraine is interested in

that because of the battlefield situation, noting that Ukrainian troops that launched an incursion into Russia's Kursk region would be fully blocked in the coming days.

"In these conditions, I believe it would be good for the Ukrainian side to secure a ceasefire for at least 30 days," he said.

Earlier in the day, an envoy of U.S. President

Donald Trump arrived in Moscow for talks on an American-proposed 30-day ceasefire that Ukraine has accepted, but a senior Russian official said the truce would only help Kyiv by giving its weary and short-handed military a break.

The diplomatic effort coincided with a Russian claim that its troops have driven the Ukrainian army out of a key town in Russia's Kursk border region, where Moscow has been trying for seven months to dislodge Ukrainian troops from their foothold.

The Russian Defense Ministry's claim that it recaptured the town of Sudzha, a Ukrainian operational hub in Kursk, came hours after President Vladimir Putin visited his commanders in Kursk.

The renewed Russian military push and Putin's high-profile visit to his troops unfolded as Trump seeks a diplomatic end to the war, which began more than three years ago with Russia's full-scale invasion.

Agency

Stalin govt changes Rupee symbol with Tamil letter



Chennai
Intensifying the language tussle with the Centre, the Tamil Nadu government on Thursday replaced the Devanagari rupee symbol with a Tamil letter in its logo for the budget 2025-26, in an unprecedented move signalling its unrelenting stance against the three-language formula under the NEP.

The move comes amidst a political firestorm over the issue after the Tamil Nadu government rejected the National Education Policy with Chief Minister M K Stalin accusing the Central government of trying to impose Hindi in the state under it and claimed that NEP was a "safarion policy" aimed at promoting and developing Hindi and not the nation.

The DMK has also asserted that Tamil Nadu would not tolerate 'Hindi colonialism' replacing British colonialism, while the Union government has accused the state government of being "dishonest" and "ruining the future of the students" in the state for politics.

The logo for the budget, released by the government on Thursday, carried 'ru', the first letter of the Tamil word 'Rubaa', which denotes the Indian currency in the vernacular language. Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu is scheduled to table the budget on Friday.

The logo also had the caption "everything for all", indicating the ruling DMK's assurance of an inclusive governance model.

CONTD ON PAGE-2

Kuki group lifts shutdown in Manipur, stranded trucks to start moving again

Guwahati
Amid the warning of the Naga People's Organisation (NPO) to Kuki-Zo Council to withdraw ongoing indefinite shutdown call, a team from the Ministry of Home Affairs led by its North East Advisor AK Mishra met with both Kuki-Zo and Meitei groups in Manipur and explained them that the Centre has prepared a roadmap for peace in ethnic strife-hit Manipur. The Naga People's Organisation (NPO) has strongly condemned the ongoing indefinite total shutdown in Kuki-Zo-dominated areas, now in its fifth day, and has demanded its immediate withdrawal.

"There has been an 'indefinite shutdown' in Kuki-Zo areas since Saturday after one youth died and many others were injured after protesters clashed with security forces in Kangpokpi district. The incident took place on the first day that the government attempted to implement "free movement" through the highways. The groups have opposed the enforcement of this move until their political demand for separate administration is addressed.

The MHA team met Kuki-Zo groups in Churachandpur district on Tuesday but the impasse over free movement and the blockade of highways in Kuki-Zo areas continued even



after it. Security sources said that the meeting was held at the DC office and was attended by members of different Kuki-Zo groups including Kangpokpi based Committee on Tribal Unity, Churachandpur based Kuki Zo Council, and Pherzawl and Jiribam-based Indigenous Tribes Advocacy Committee.

On Wednesday morning, the MHA representatives also met members of Meitei groups such as Federation of Civil Societies (FOCS), All

Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (AMUCO), Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) in Imphal. "During the meeting, we submitted a memorandum with five demands. For free movement along all highways, the rehabilitation of internally displaced people, stopping violence on civilians and to ascertain the true demographic of Manipur," said FOCS spokesperson Nangbam Chamehane Singh. Agency

HIGHLIGHT

■ Kuki-Zo Council vows to continue opposition to the free movement of all in Manipur, seeks separate administration; highways had been shut since the death of a protester in Kangpokpi clashes

Prez nod for FIR against Sisodia, Jain in Rs 2 000-cr classroom 'scam'

New Delhi
President Droupadi Murmu has given her approval for the registration of an FIR against AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain in an alleged scam of Rs 2,000 crore in the construction of classrooms in Delhi government schools, sources said.

In 2022, the Delhi government's vigilance directorate recommended a probe into the alleged scam and submitted a report to the chief secretary.

The President has given her approval for registering the FIR against Sisodia and Jain in connection with the alleged scam during their tenures as ministers in the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government, the sources said.

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), in a report dated February 17, 2020, highlighted "glaring irregularities" in the construction of classrooms in Delhi government schools by the Public Works Department (PWD).

The President's approval came under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act that pertains to "enquiry or inquiry or investigation of offences relating to recommendations made or decision taken by public servant in discharge of official functions or duties".

Reacting to the development, senior AAP leader Sarabjot Bhardwaj accused the BJP of carrying out a witch-hunt against its political rivals.

The BJP has no interest or intention to fulfil the promises it made to the people of Delhi. Its only agenda is to carry out a witch-hunt against its political rivals to sti-



ple the voice of people, the former minister said in a statement.

The BJP-led central government has already decided to prosecute every political adversary of the party and grant approvals to move the case forward but it should wait for the judicial process to begin, he said.

In July 2019, BJP leader Harish Khurana and then AAP rebel MLA Kapil Mishra, now a minister in the Delhi government, lodged a police complaint about the alleged scam.

According to a report prepared by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) of the Delhi government, the complainants alleged that there was a scam worth over Rs 2,000 crore in the construction of classrooms and school buildings in Delhi. The work was done at a highly inflated cost by the Delhi government.

The alleged scam involves the construction of around 12,748 classrooms.

The ACB report said the total expenditure incurred for constructing the classrooms and school buildings was around Rs 2,992.65 crore. They were allegedly constructed at the

rate of Rs 8,800 per square feet, whereas it was common knowledge that the average construction cost (even for a builder of flats) was around Rs 1,500 per square feet.

The total cost for constructing a classroom and school building, according to the tender awarded, was allegedly around Rs 24.86 lakh per room, whereas such rooms are easily constructed in Delhi at around Rs 5 lakh per room, it said.

The prices were increased almost five times to defraud the taxpayer by siphoning off money from the public exchequer in the garb of construction cost, the report said.

Even for a 5-star hotel, top ultra-luxury quality construction is around Rs 5,000 to Rs 5,500 per square feet, it said.

The complainants submitted a copy of documents in which information received under the RTI Act in respect of the construction of 18 classrooms in the Govt Girls Senior Secondary School, Nathpura, Buri (school ID: 1207111) revealed that they were constructed at a cost of Rs 12 crore, the ACB report said. Agency

Trump threatens 200% tariff on European wine, champagne

Washington
President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened a 200% tariff on European wine, Champagne and spirits if the European Union goes forward with a planned tariff on American whiskey.

The European import tax, which was unveiled in response to steel and aluminum tariffs by the U.S. administration, is expected to go into effect on April 1, just ahead of separate reciprocal tariffs that Trump plans to place on the EU.

But Trump, in a morning social media post, vowed a new escalation in his trade war if the EU goes forward with the planned 50% tax on American whiskey.



"If this Tariff is not removed immediately, the U.S. will shortly place a 200% Tariff on all WINES, CHAMPAGNES, & ALCOHOLIC PRODUCTS COMING OUT OF

FRANCE AND OTHER E.U. REPRESENTED COUNTRIES," Trump wrote. "This will be great for the Wine and Champagne businesses in the U.S."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Thursday that the EU trade commissioner would be having a phone call Friday with his U.S.

counterpart. "We don't like tariffs because we think tariffs are taxes and they are bad for business and they are bad for consumers," she said. "We have always said at the same time that we will defend our interests. We've said it, and we've shown it, but at the same time I also want to emphasize that we are open for negotiations."

The U.S. president has defined his opening weeks in the White House with near daily drama regarding tariffs, saying that taxing imports might cause some economic pain but would eventually lead to more domestic manufacturing and greater respect for America.

Agency

Stalin govt changes Rupee symbol with Tamil letter

CONT FROM PAGE-1

The symbol change triggered a political slugfest, with the BJP leaders attacking the DMK, and the ruling party members asking if any rule barred such a depiction. DMK MLA Ezhilan Naganathan justified the move and said there was nothing wrong with using the mother tongue.

Slamming the Stalin government's move, BJP TN chief K Annamalai asked the chief minister how stupid he could be to do it.

The DMK Government's State Budget for 2025-26 replaces the Rupee Symbol designed by a Tamilian, which was adopted by the whole of Bharat and incorporated into our Currency. This is the son of a former DMK MLA. How stupid can you become, Thiru @mstalinTN? he said in a social media post.

He also shared the logo of the 2024-25 TN budget that has the Devanagari symbol.

Responding to Annamalai's criticism, DMK spokesperson Saravanan Annadurai said no law "opposed or stopped using Ru in Tamil." "Then why such anger," he asked in a post on X.

Senior BJP leader and former state union chief Tamilisai Soundararajan also attacked the DMK.

"We feel very sorry for the attitude of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister (Stalin) and the Tamil Nadu government," she told PTI Videos. "It is 'stupidity', like Annamalai mentioned, she said. She also asked why the change was made after so long and if they have 'become Tamil now.' "They are against national integrity, national unity," she charged.

Hitting back at the BJP, Ezhilan said: "Using the mother tongue for all purposes is the theme of any Union Government. It is interesting to note that they have set. So, it is falling on those lines." "It is very clear that we had a Tamil transcript of the Budget, and for that, Tamil 'Ru' for Rupee has been used. So, we are using the mother tongue for official purposes, which is mandatory everywhere," he told reporters.

BJP state vice president Narayanan Thirupathi claimed that Stalin has proved that he would "stoop down" to any level to hide the "failures" of his government in the last four years.

"It is not only laughable but also childish and immature to do this and people would laugh at this silly attitude. It's time people say goodbye to @arivalayam. It is interesting to note that the '₹' symbol was designed in 2010 by a Thamiathan and that, too, a son of former @arivalayam during the UPA rule in which @arivalayam was also a part," Narayanan said in a post on X.

S G Suryah, BJP state secretary, said the Rupee symbol was not designed and adapted by the BJP but by Congress and the DMK-led UPA regime.

Congress Slams Yogi: Calls Out CM for Endorsing 'Goon-Like' Police Mindset

New Delhi

With Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath supporting a Sambhal police officer who made a controversial remark on Holi, the Congress Thursday said it is "highly condemnable" for an elected CM to "promote" such "roadside goon-like" thinking.

The party said the nature of this country will not let "divisive plans" to succeed.

Speaking to media after a peace meeting in Sambhal earlier this month, Circle Officer Anuj Chaudhury had said that Holi is a festival that comes once a year, whereas Friday prayers take place 52 times a year. If anyone feels uncomfortable with the colours of Holi, they should stay indoors on that day, he had said.

Adityanath last Saturday supported the remarks, saying the official might have spoken as a "pehelwan", but what the Arjun awardee said



was correct.

On the eve of Holi, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khara said Holi is not a festival of any one colour but of all colours and love.

"In such a case, it is highly condemnable for an elected chief minister to promote such thinking of a police officer

that is more like that of a roadside goon," Khara said in his post in Hindi on X.

Those who promote communal animosity probably do not know that in the last 25 years, there have been six instances of Holi and 'Jumma namaz' falling on the same day and being celebrated peacefully, Khara said.

But such fanatic thinking has been seen for the first time, he added.

"From the Mughals to the British and in the last 75 years, Holi has been celebrated with great enthusiasm every time, but this is the first time that a Hindu festival has come under threat during the government of self-pro-

claimed contractors of Hindus. What kind of contractors of Hindus are these and what kind of useless government is this?" the Congress leader said.

"Why do we have to dance in front of mosques during our festivals? This ridiculous thinking has no place in Hindu culture," he said.

"Today, foolish government officials are warning Muslims not to

step out of their homes on Holi, tomorrow these foolish officials will warn Hindus not to step out of their homes on Eid! What kind of joke is this country being made of?" Khara said.

The nature of this country will not let their divisive plans succeed, he added.

"In the thousands of years of history of this country's civilization and culture, many rulers have come and gone, but the civilization and culture of this country remained intact, because the nature of this country is so strong," he said.

"All of you should play Holi with full enthusiasm and do not let any force be used - be it on women, Hindus, Muslims or anyone else," he said. "Wishing you all a very Happy Holi," Khara added.

Holi this year will be celebrated on a Friday. Sambhal had witnessed communal violence in November last year.

Congress leaders call for micro-management strengthening organisation at grassroots

New Delhi

Top Congress leaders from Punjab on Thursday stressed the need to strengthen the party organisation at the grassroots level and a micro-management plan to expose the state's AAP government.

Bhupesh Baghel, the Congress general secretary in-charge of party affairs in Punjab, said there was an exodus in AAP in the state and added its boat was about to sink.

"There is an exodus in AAP and the boat is about to sink. When it will sink, I don't know," Baghel told reporters after the meeting.

A meeting of the party's Punjab political affairs committee was held at the new AICC headquarters where several leaders, including Congress Legislature Party leader Pratap Bajwa and Pradesh Congress Committee chief Amarinder Singh Raja Warring spoke freely.

"We discussed ways to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level, according to the AICC's directions. The Congress is very strong in Punjab but there is need for micro-management. We gave a message of making the party strong and everyone spoke freely," Baghel said.

In the next meeting, the state unit will prepare its agenda against the Punjab government that will be taken to the booth level, he added.

He further said there would be a training programme for party leaders and booth committees would be formed.

"We will be fighting for issues related to farmers, youngsters, women, Dalits, and drugs-related matters," he said. "We will prepare an agenda on Punjab's issues and against the government. We will go up to the booth level and prepare a proper agenda... Booth-level committees will also be formed and hold a training programme for our workers," he added. Agency

Progressive Policies Can Pave the Way for Safer Tobacco Alternatives in India: PMI's Frederic De Wilde

New Delhi

At the IT NOW Global Business Summit 2025, Frederic De Wilde, President of SSEA, CIS & MEA Region at Philip Morris International (PMI), emphasized the need for regulatory modernization to facilitate the introduction of scientifically backed, less harmful alternatives for India's 300 million tobacco users, including 100 million smokers.

Addressing the summit, De Wilde highlighted how advancements in science and technology are reshaping the tobacco industry, making it imperative for regulations to evolve in tandem with innovation. He noted that the biggest challenge for any industry undergoing transformation is regulation, stressing that modern policies are crucial to driving long-term impact.

Citing global success stories, he pointed to Japan, where alterna-

tive products have led to a 50% reduction in combustible cigarette consumption, and Sweden, which has achieved Europe's lowest smoking rate at just 5%. This decline, he said, correlates with lower lung cancer cases among men, demonstrating the positive impact of policy-driven change.

Drawing parallels with India's regulatory advancements in renewable energy and digital payments, De Wilde urged policymakers to extend similar clarity to tobacco control. He emphasized that India's structured regulatory framework has fueled investment and innovation across various industries, and a similar approach to scientifically validated tobacco alternatives could significantly contribute to public health progress.

Beyond regulatory reforms, De Wilde underscored PMI's commit-

ment to sustainability and farmer empowerment. As India remains a key player in global tobacco production, PMI's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) initiative aims to enhance productivity while reducing environmental impact. Supporting farmers through sustainable practices, he said, is vital for ensuring economic stability and minimizing ecological footprints.

Concluding his address, De Wilde called for responsible industry evolution, asserting that with progressive policies, India can drive transformation, attract investment-driven growth, and set a global benchmark in tobacco regulation and public health initiatives. He emphasized that industries can evolve responsibly, economies can grow sustainably, and India has the potential to lead in progressive trade and policy development.

Indus Appstore & Xiaomi Partner to Redefine India's App Ecosystem

Chandigarh

Indus Appstore, India's homegrown Android app marketplace, has announced a multi-year partnership with Xiaomi India, a global technology leader, to enhance India's digital ecosystem. This strategic alliance reflects both companies' commitment to fostering a localized and inclusive digital infrastructure tailored for Indian consumers.

As part of the collaboration, Indus Appstore will be integrated into all new Xiaomi smartphones in India, replacing GetApps on existing devices. This move aims to improve accessibility, streamline app discovery, and enhance user experience through a more localized app marketplace.

Driving Innovation and Accessibility. Priya M Narasimhan, Chief Business Officer of Indus Appstore, highlighted the significance of the partnership, stating, "Our partnership with

Xiaomi India marks a significant milestone towards our goal of building a horizontal app marketplace for Indian mobile users and developers. By combining Xiaomi India's reach with our localized app discovery platform, we're creating opportunities for developers while delivering a seamless, culturally relevant experience to users. This partnership is just the beginning of our vision to transform how India discovers and experiences mobile apps."

Sudhin Mathur, Chief Operating Officer of Xiaomi India, emphasized the growing need for a localized app marketplace, saying, "As India's digital ecosystem continues to grow, the demand for a locally driven app marketplace has never been more critical. At Xiaomi India, we have always championed 'Make for India' innovations, and this partnership with Indus

Appstore is a strategic step in that direction. By integrating Indus Appstore with our ecosystem, we aim to offer users a seamless and enriched app discovery experience while also supporting Indian developers in reaching a wider audience."

Building a Self-Reliant Digital Infrastructure. This collaboration is expected to strengthen India's self-reliant digital infrastructure by integrating a feature-rich, consumer-first app marketplace. By prioritizing local needs and fostering innovation, Indus Appstore and Xiaomi India seek to empower millions of users and developers, contributing to the broader vision of a digitally inclusive nation.

Mining activity in Goa to resume in next six months Union minister

Panaji

Union minister G Kishan Reddy on Thursday said iron ore mining activity in Goa, which came to a standstill in 2018, would resume in the next six months.

The Coal and Mines Minister was talking to reporters here after launching the country's first-ever auction of Exploration Licences (ELs) for 13 exploration blocks for critical minerals.

"The Goa government is following all the norms laid down by the Supreme Court with regards to iron ore mining. The mining activity will begin full-fledged in Goa in the next six months," he said.

Reddy said all issues related to environmental concerns, revenue generation and employment opportunities would be addressed during the resumption of the mining activity.

He said he had a productive discussion on each mineral block in the state.

The Union minister chaired a review meeting on Thursday in Goa

to know the status of the auctioned mines, plans to auction more mineral blocks as well as non-operational mining leases in the coastal state.

The iron ore mining activity in Goa first came to a standstill in 2012 after the Justice M B Shah Commission pointed out illegalities in the sector. The industry partially resumed its operations in 2014, but was shut down again in February 2018 after the Supreme Court quashed 88 mining leases.

Talking to reporters, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant welcomed the Centre's push to revive Goa's mining sector, and added that it was significant to the state's economy.

Goa has already auctioned 12 mineral blocks, out of which nine are expected to commence their operations soon, he said.

Two to three blocks are awaiting clearances from the Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry, he said.

Agency

Himachal Growth Surges to 6.7%, Per Capita Income Up 9.6%: Eco Survey

Shimla

Himachal Pradesh's growth rate improved to 6.7 per cent in 2024-25 as per the advance estimates while the per capita income increased by 9.6 per cent in the current fiscal, according to the Economic Survey presented by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu in the Vidhan Sabha on Thursday.

The Gross State Domestic Product at constant prices (2011-12) for 2024-25 was estimated at Rs 1,46,553 crore against Rs 1,37,320 crore in 2023-24, reflecting a growth rate of 6.7 per cent.

The per capita income of the state also increased by 9.6 per cent from Rs 2,34,782 in 2023-24 to Rs 2,57,212 in 2024-25 while the compound Annual Growth of per capita income from 2011-12 to 2024-25 was 8.6 per cent.

The contribution of the tertiary sector to Gross Value Added (GVA) was 45.3 per cent, followed by the secondary sector 39.5 per cent and the primary sector

15.2 per cent. The Gross State Value Added (GSVA) from the primary sector at constant prices is expected to be Rs 16,265 crore in 2024-25 against Rs 16,116 crore in 2023-24, registering a growth rate of 3.2 per cent.

The GSVA of the secondary sector is estimated at Rs 65,134 crore in 2024-25 against Rs 60,238 crore in 2023-24, registering a growth rate of 8.1 per cent.

The Agriculture and Allied Sectors reflected a sustained growth of the primary sector over the years and its contribution to GSVA at current prices increased by 53 per cent from Rs 20,898 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 31,879 crore in 2024-25. There has been a

marked improvement in GSVA of crops at current prices from Rs 12,341 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 21,912 crore in 2024-25, an increase of 78 per cent.

As per advance estimates, agriculture and allied sector GSVA is estimated to increase by 3.07 per cent at constant prices in 2024-25 against a growth rate of 2.63 per cent in 2023-24. The industrial sector is expected to grow at a rate of 8.1 per cent in 2024-25, compared to 6.5 per cent at the national level.

The growth of industrial sector is expected to be of 8.1 per cent in 2024-25, compared to 6.5 per cent at the national level and total GVA of industry sector, including Mining and Quarrying for 2024-25 has been estimated at Rs 86,695 crore at current prices (40 per cent) of which the contribution of manufacturing sector was 26.19 per cent, construction 7.68 per cent and electricity and water supply 5.66 per cent.

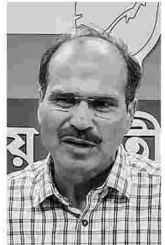
Mamata 'hypocrite' tries to appease both Hindus and Muslims for votes Adhir

Kolkata

Congress Leader Adhir Chowdhury on Thursday launched a scathing attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, calling her a "hypocrite" who tries to "appease" both Hindus and Muslims for votes.

Chowdhury also mocked the CM, claiming that she was "enjoying" the war of words between the BJP and TMC over Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari's controversial remarks on Muslim MLAs.

"There is no discussion on the future of the state or education, finance and health (in the assembly). Instead, one is saying that Muslims will not be allowed to enter, while another is saying that he will thrash the other... and the CM is enjoying this," Chowdhury told reporters here.



In response, two Muslim legislators of the TMC, one of them a member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, slammed Adhikari, demanding that he take back his words or face protests.

Threatening to take legal action against Adhikari, junior minister Siddiquilal Chowdhury said Muslims have been living with Hindus and other communities for years, and that the country belongs to all.

"Have you seen Mamata Banerjee asking anyone to stop? This divisive politics is having an impact on a liberal party like the Congress," Adhir Chowdhury said.

In meeting on pollution Delhi CM Gupta outlines plans for clean green city

New Delhi
In a bid to free Delhi of pollution, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday outlined plans for a clean, green and healthy city.
 Gupta chaired a meeting to discuss steps to make the national capital cleaner and pollution-free that was attended by Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa and senior officials from the environment and the public works departments, Delhi Police, Commission for Air Quality Management, Delhi Development Authority, and civic bodies.
 During the meeting, the chief minister directed the departments and the agencies to accelerate pollution-control efforts.
 "We are dedicated to creating a clean, green and healthy capital with the support of Delhi's residents," Gupta said in a post in Hindi on X.
 According to a state-



According to a statement, the chief minister announced that sprinklers and smog guns would be deployed throughout the year -- except during the monsoon -- to combat dust pollution.

ment, the chief minister announced that sprinklers and smog guns would be deployed throughout the year -- except during the monsoon -- to combat dust pollution.
 She also directed increasing the number of enforcement teams at Delhi's borders to monitor vehicle emission.
 "Vehicles coming from outside Delhi contribute significantly to pollution. That is why we have directed the departments to increase enforcement teams at the border points and install digital display boards to raise awareness about pollution," the statement quoted her as saying.
 Emphasising the need for regular upkeep to control dust pollution, Gupta said, "All road-owning agencies, including the

Municipal Corporation of Delhi, public works department and the Delhi Development Authority, have been instructed to submit weekly reports on road repair and cleanliness."
 The review covered the key contributors to pollution, with the chief minister stressing that strict monitoring and swift action would follow any violations.

She directed the officials to present an action plan within a week to ensure coordinated efforts among the departments.
 "Our government is committed to safeguarding the people of Delhi from air pollution. Regular inspections and immediate responses are crucial to improving air quality," Gupta asserted.
 She added that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Delhi government had intensified efforts to combat air pollution as part of the Viksit Delhi Sankalp Patra (Developed Delhi Resolution).
 "We have started essential preparations to ensure a cleaner, pollution-free capital."
 All the departments concerned were also directed to take concrete and effective measures to accelerate pollution-control efforts, the chief minister said.

Two held for British woman's rape molestation in Delhi

New Delhi
 Delhi police have arrested two men, one of whom allegedly raped a British woman at a hotel in Mahipalpur in the national capital after befriending her online, and another man who molested her when she tried to raise an alarm, a police official said on Thursday.
 Following the arrests, the police intimated the British High Commission about the incident, which took place on the night of March 11.
 The woman travelled to India a month ago and stayed in Maharashtra for some time before visiting Goa.
 She came to Delhi on March 11 to meet Kailash, 24, whom she met on Instagram recently, said the police official.
 The British national had booked a room at a hotel in the area and had a few drinks with the man before he allegedly raped her and left.
 When she tried to raise



an alarm with the hotel staffers, one of them, identified as the hotel's 27-year-old housekeeper touched her inappropriately in the hotel lift, the official added.
 On March 12, she went to a hospital following which the police learnt about the incident and registered a case under Sections 64 (rape), 75 (sexual harassment), 127(2) (wrongful confinement) and 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt) of the BNS was registered at the Vasant Kunj North Police Station.
 "We arrested the accused within few hours of the in-

cident. It was easier to track him since he had submitted documents in the hotel when he came to meet her there," said the police official.
 They accused were produced in a court and remanded to judicial custody.
 The police said the survivor first spoke to the accused on the social media platform a month-and-a-half ago following which they started to chat frequently.
 Kailash, a resident of east Delhi, the police said, struggled to speak the English language and used a translation app to communicate with her.
 Police teams are now checking the hotel's CCTV footage to establish the sequence of the events leading to the alleged crime.
 A special team, led by an ACP and under the supervision of the DCP, was formed to probe the case and have seized the accused's cell phone to verify if he contacted any other women on social media.

Fire at popular biryani chain outlet in Connaught Place leaves 6 injured


New Delhi
 An LPG cylinder leakage in the kitchen of a popular biryani chain ignited a fire Thursday afternoon, leaving three staff and as many customers injured, a Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official here said.
 The fire started from the kitchen of the Bikkagane Biryani at Connaught Place here around 11:30 am and six fire tenders were rushed to the scene to control the blaze.
 Restaurant staff Mahindra (25) sustained 81 per cent burn injuries, while Piyush (31) and Deepak (39) have suffered 70 per cent burns, the DFS official said.
 The three staff were working in the kitchen of the restaurant at the time of the incident.
 The fire official said that three customers -- Md Alam (21), Sairuddin (28) and Janak (26) -- were sitting close to the kitchen and suffered upto 30 per cent burns.
 The official added that the injured have been taken to RML Hospital for treatment.
 The official said they received an alert about the fire around 11:55 am and dispatched six fire tenders. The fire broke out in the kitchen, which is located on the rear side of the restaurant, due to

an LPG cylinder leakage, he said.
 Restaurant staff and customers were evacuated as firefighters worked to contain the flames. Police also reached the spot.
 Authorities are assessing whether safety protocols were followed at the restaurant, which has multiple outlets in the country including Delhi, and if there was negligence on part of any staff, a senior police official said.
 A shopkeeper said he heard a noise between 11:30 am and 12 pm. "The cries of the workers caught in the fire alerted the police in the area who came rushing following which the injured were sent to the hospital," he added.
 Ram Sakal Yadav (55), a tea seller who has a stall nearby, said the fire broke out around 12 pm and he saw the victims being taken out by the rescue team. "I heard noises and saw four people, who were severely burnt, being rescued," he said.
 Rakesh, working in another eatery located next to the restaurant, said they became aware of the incident due to police inspection at their place. "The police came to our place as well to inspect if the fire did any damage here too," he said.

Murder illicit affairs in Delhi suicide victim's past

New Delhi
 A history of crime and illicit affairs streaked the Delhi triple suicide, which seemed at first a desperate coda to a life of hardships.
 Hailing from Bihar, Pooja, 42, was found dead with her two daughters at her home in southeast Delhi's Molarband on Wednesday. Remnants of froth stuck around their mouths, and their bodies decomposing.
 Preliminary investigation by police has now revealed an eventful past of the oldest of the three victims.
 According to police, Pooja was once married to Santosh, with whom she had a daughter and a son -- Anjali, Vishal Singh. Santosh left her about 22-25 years ago. After his abandonment, she started living with one Rishipal Sharma in Pul Prahladpur area.
 Soon, Pooja started seeing another man, Akil, who hailed from Rampur in Uttar Pradesh.
 It was this latest lover, who she hatched a plan to

kill Rishipal with.
 Pooja also roped in her son Vishal Singh and another man, Mehndi Hassan, in the enterprise.
 On May 10, 2022, when Rishipal was returning home in Pul Prahladpur from Noida, he was fired at, police said. On May 15, he succumbed to the gunshot wound.
 "The motive behind murder of Rishipal was to grab his property and get rid of him as Pooja was now in relationship with Akil," said the officer investigating the suicides.
 According to police, while Akil and Pooja came recently out on bail, Vishal Singh remains behind bars.
 Akil and Pooja began a life again in southeast Delhi, taking a house on rent, and sharing it with Pooja's two daughters -- Shijal, 8, adopted, and Anjali, 18.
 Things, however, turned for worse last month, when Akil went to his native place and died there on February 13.




Government of Haryana



Heartiest Greetings

on the Colourful Festival of

Holi


March 14, 2025



"होली की बहुत-बहुत शुभकामनाएं।
 आप सभी के जीवन में हमेशा आनंद और उमंग का रंग बरसे!"
 - नरेन्द्र मोदी

Scan the QR code to join the WhatsApp channel of Information and Public Relations Department, Haryana



Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana | www.prharyana.gov.in | t.me/prharyana | www.facebook.com/prharyana | www.instagram.com/prharyana | www.youtube.com/prharyana | www.linkedin.com/prharyana

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cable thefts hit metro train services

Staff Reporter
New Delhi
The metro train services on Red Line were hit on Thursday due to theft of cables (signalling) between Seelampur and Welcome metro stations on preceding night, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said.

The metro train services were regulated on Red Line i.e. Rithala to Shaheed Sthal (New Bus Adda) since morning today. The theft of cables disrupted the signalling system and trains were run with a restricted speed of 25kmph in the affected section from Mansarovar Park to Seelampur Metro station since morning till 12:21 PM today.

This caused a cascading effect on the entire Red Line resulting into delay in overall passenger trip from one end to another end during this period today. The system runs with the support of hundreds of kilometre of cables running across the viaduct/tunnel to support the signalling, traction, telecommunication, electrical systems etc. for effective running of train services.

Any damage to the cables, causes unwarranted delay in metro services as replacing them during revenue service hours where trains run every 3-5 minutes is quite challenging and risky. Despite this, the DMRC in most such occasions have attempted emergency measures to ensure that the replacement of cables is done in the fastest possible manner to avoid inconvenience to its passengers in the long run. However, sometimes if that doesn't materialize, the restoration work is generally taken up in the night after revenue services are over.

New PF office to be opened in Gr. Noida

Noida
The Regional Provident Fund Organisation may open its new branch in the Greater Noida Authority office building.

The organisation has sent this proposal to the headquarters.

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation office is operating in sector-24. More than 15 lakh people are associated here. Hence, there is an additional burden of work here. For the convenience of the people, approval was given to open a PF office in Greater Noida.

Employees will be deployed in the new PF office from the headquarters itself. Preparations for this have already been made. Opening of the PF office in Greater Noida will provide convenience to lakhs of people and they will be able to avoid long journeys for work.

There is a burden of extra work at the PF office located in sector-24. In such a situation, it sometimes takes time to resolve the complaints lodged by the people. With the opening of the office in Greater Noida, these complaints will definitely be resolved.

Delhi Police cop killed in road accident while on duty

New Delhi
A Delhi Police assistant sub-inspector died in a road accident while attending an emergency call on Outer Ring Road near Barari flyover early Thursday, an official said on Thursday.

The accident occurred when ASI Satyvir Singh (57), posted at Barari Police Station, was responding to a PCR call around 1 am where

Free dialysis services to cover all Delhi govt hospitals says health minister

New Delhi
The Delhi government plans to expand free dialysis services under the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme to all state-run hospitals, Health Minister Pankaj Singh said on Thursday.

Speaking at an event on World Kidney Day, the minister highlighted the city government's commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the guidance of Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

Announcing plans to expand the free dialysis services, he also said economically weaker sections would be prioritised in Delhi government hospitals, ensuring the same high-quality care for them as other patients.



Singh urged the medical staff to treat patients with professionalism and compassion, creating a more welcoming and supportive environment in hospitals. He laid stress on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle to protect kidney health and said, "The kidney is an essential organ that helps remove waste materials, regulate blood pressure, support red blood cell production and maintain bone health."

Singh highlighted the rising prevalence of kidney diseases, attributing it to high blood sugar, hypertension, obesity and modern lifestyle.

AAP leader Kuldeep Kumar protests over 'unfulfilled' free gas cylinder promise

New Delhi
AAP leader Kuldeep Kumar staged a protest at TPO here on Thursday over the BJP's "unfulfilled" promise to provide free gas cylinders to women in Delhi, saying nobody got them even as Holi celebrations have begun.

"The BJP had assured free gas cylinders to women, but today is the first day of Holi, and they are yet to receive them," Kumar said. Delhi BJP president

Virendra Sachdeva slammed AAP over the protest and accused it of resorting to "politics of lies". "Initially, they spoke about providing Rs 2,500, and when the chief minister of Delhi has allocated a substantial budget of Rs 5,100, they shifted focus to cylinders," Sachdeva said.

He emphasised that while the BJP acknowledges the need for providing free cylinders, "There's a

process, and the budget is coming. They are only doing politics now." He added, "They have no real work and only focus on protests. We will fulfil everything we promised." AAP claimed that many women booked their cylinders, believing they would be free, only to be asked to pay the full amount. "These women are now asking—what happened to the free cylinder? When will

we receive the Rs 2,500 that was promised? Today is Holi, a time for celebration. Shouldn't this promise be fulfilled now?" Kumar questioned. He added that if the commitment remains unmet, he will raise the issue again in Diwali. A protester, Anjana Prasad, from Trilokpuri said, "We were assured a free gas cylinder, but we had to pay Rs 800 for it on Holi."

Delhi CMO gets control of its official X handle

New Delhi
Delhi Chief Minister's Office (CMO) on Thursday said that its official X handle, which was "not properly handed over" to the incoming BJP government by the AAP dispensation, has now been restored.

A controversy erupted last month as the CMO Delhi X handle was renamed "KejriwalAtWork", days after the BJP won the Assembly polls held on February 5.

The BJP stormed to power in Delhi in the results announced on February 8, winning 48 of the 70 Assembly seats. Rekha Gupta became the new chief minister.

The BJP had accused the AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal of "hijacking" the official CMO social media account and demanded Lt Governor V K Saxena's intervention. In a post on X on Thurs-

day, the Rekha Gupta-led Chief Minister's Office said, "We want to inform the people of Delhi that the previous government had not handed over the @CMODelhi handle properly. Under the rules of X, this handle has now come under the control of the Chief Minister's Office. It will now share important information of the Chief Minister's Office."

Earlier, the CMO had written to X, seeking restoration of the official handle to it.

The BJP had demanded legal action against former chief minister Kejriwal over the renaming of the CMO Delhi handle to "KejriwalAtWork" and using it for his personal posts.

Former chief minister and AAP leader Atishah had defended the move, saying X has a clear cut policy and legal guidelines of account ownership.

Sanjay Gehlot extended his wishes for a joyful Holi festival

Ajeet Kumar
Noida
Sanjay Gehlot, the Chairman of the Delhi Safai Karamchari Commission, extended his wishes for a joyful Holi festival to all citizens. He emphasized that Holi is a time to celebrate love and unity while praying for the removal of negativity and the blessing of happiness and peace in everyone's lives.



Gehlot mentioned that all sorrows should be

burned away in the Holi's Dahar fire, bringing new colors and excitement to life.

He noted that Holi is celebrated with great enthusiasm both in India and abroad, symbolizing the victory of good over evil.

Gehlot encouraged everyone to draw inspiration from this festival to always choose the path of truth and reject lies and deceit.

Security beefed up in Gurugram ahead of Holi

Gurugram
The Gurugram Police have set up 62 additional checkpoints to maintain law and order and traffic in the city during Holi festivities on Friday, officials said.

A total of 72 Police ERVs and 135 Police Riders teams will be deployed for quick response, they said. According to the police, 37 checkpoints have been set up in all four police zones -- East, West, South and Manesar -- for general duty while 25 checkpoints have been set up by the traffic police in these zones.

"Strict security arrangements will be made to ensure a ruckus on the roads, the spokesperson said.



Some vehicles will be deployed at the checkpoints to keep a check on triple riding on two-wheelers, driving without helmet and drunk driving," a Gurugram police spokesperson said.

Strict action will be taken against those who will create a ruckus on the roads, the spokesperson said.

"All SHOs have been instructed to check hooliganism in their respective areas and take strict action against the miscreants," the spokesperson said. The Gurugram Police is also keeping a close watch on social media and monitoring it round-the-clock. "If anyone posts content related to hate speech or inflammatory speech on social media, the police will register a case and take strict legal action," the spokesperson said. Apart from this, a police force has been deployed with special guidelines in crowded areas like cinema halls, malls, bus stands and railway stations, the official said.

DMRC plans security upgrades after another cable theft incident

New Delhi
Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) announced on Thursday that it will implement a set of measures to prevent cable theft incidents, which have often disrupted its services across multiple lines.

This step comes after a signalling cable was stolen from a track this morning between Seelampur and Welcome Metro stations on the Red Line, affecting services for at least four hours.

The DMRC stated that it will cover cables with cement, install anti-theft clamps, place concertina coils and add covers over cable trays.



DMRC is exploring the use of drones and CCTV cameras in areas prone to theft, the statement added. It further stated that any damage to the cables causes an unwarranted delay in metro services as replacing them during revenue service hours, where trains run every three to five minutes, is quite challenging and risky.

According to the DMRC, since June 2024, 89 cases of cable thefts have been reported from various corridors of the Metro network. These thefts include 35 cases of traction cables, 32 instances of signalling cables and 22 cases of electrical cables.

Delhi CM Gupta celebrates Holi at shelter home promises facility improvements

New Delhi
Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday celebrated Holi with children at the state-run Asha Kiran shelter home and said the government, as their guardian, would ensure their proper care.

Accompanied by Social Welfare Minister Ravinder Indraj Singh, the chief minister distributed sweets and chocolates among the children.

"I have instructed the officials to address any shortcomings and improve the facilities," she said.



Gupta said the shelter home in Rohini was accommodating more children than its intended capacity and added that the social welfare department, which operates the facility, would be directed to make arrangements to address the issue. The chief minister said she had asked Singh to upgrade the park on the shelter home premises with better equipment. "I will personally oversee this centre to ensure the children receive proper care and the government will conduct surprise inspections in the near future," Gupta said and added she planned to visit the facility more frequently to monitor the conditions.

"Visiting Asha Kiran and interacting with these children was a profoundly moving experience. I am happy to

see that they are living in a peaceful environment. The government is their guardian and it is our duty to take special care of their needs," the chief minister said. Gupta also inspected the shelter home's kitchen and the quality of food served to the children, according to a statement. Following the chief minister's instructions, the departments concerned were directed to undertake cleaning, whitewashing, renovation and infrastructure improvements at the shelter home.

Delhi youth steals temple cash buys laptop kitchen items held

New Delhi
Delhi Police has arrested a man for allegedly stealing cash from a temple and using the money to buy a second-hand laptop and kitchen items, an official said on Thursday.

The police said the accused, Varun (20), had committed a burglary at Shree Ram Mandir Trust in Sultanpuri by breaking the donation box and stealing cash. A complaint was lodged on March 4 in this regard. Police analysed CCTV footage and activated their informants, following which the accused was nabbed from the Raj Park area on Wednesday.



He further said that the probe has also linked him to another temple theft in the Raj Park area, where he had stolen brass utensils and sold them. (IWH-678/2024-25)

EASTERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. EL/HWH/25/21 (Noida/051) Date : 12.03.2025
Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, DRM Building, Near Railway Station, Howrah-711001. Invites open tenders for the under mentioned electrical work/s: SL No. (1): Tender No. EL-HWH-25-21-3308-R; Name of Work: Installation of Pump-motor set in connection with the work for "Provision of deep Tube Well (200 m) at 15th Km, Kamara, Khedia, Chamarighi, Karjuna Gram, Amanur including Chlorination Plant with standby boring at KAN and SIKG station Under AEW/NW"; Tender Value (Rs.): 24,88,991.00; Bid Security (Earnest Money (Rs.): 49,800.00; Completion Period : 120 Days; SL No. (2) : Tender No. EL-HWH-25-21-3428; Name of Work: Improvement of outside area illumination at Howrah station old complex, new complex and new DRM building's surrounding area; Tender Value (Rs.): 30,62,938.00; Bid Security (Earnest Money (Rs.): 61,300.00; Completion Period : 180 Days; Closing Date and Time: 04.04.2025 at 15:00 hrs. In case the date of closing mentioned in the notice inviting tender is declared a holiday/bandh/strike on any account, the date of closing tender online will not be changed as the application in the website of IREPS does not permit submission of any offer after closing date and time of the tender. However, opening of tenders online will be on any convenient day after closing date and time of the tender. The details of tender are available at: www.bids.eil.com. Invitations are requested to submit their offer online on the above website.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Divisional Railway Manager (Works) N. C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work.
E-Tender No. : JHS-ENGG-N-2025-34 Approx Cost : 1406990.00
Description of work : Supplying drinking water through water tanks at way side Rly Stations & staff colonies in STU (incl) to DHO (Excl) CWL (incl) to UDMR (Excl) under SC. (ENGG) jurisdiction for the period of 02 years.
Earnest Money : 28100.00 Date of Closing Tender: 09.04.2025 at 15:00 hrs
Date of completion/period from issue acceptance letter : 24 months
* Tender on line can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs. on 09.04.2025
* For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railway website www.ireps.gov.in
* North central railways @ www.nctr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPROMCH

CM Saini accuses Congress of telling lies running away when confronted with truth

Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday tore into the opposition Congress, claiming it only tells lies and runs away when confronted with truth.



Replying to a debate on the motion of thanks to the governor's address in the Assembly, Saini said the opposition during the discussions repeatedly accused the state government of doing nothing to show as its achievements, as he gave a detailed account of the several initiatives taken by the BJP regime in the state.

The Congress members staged a walkout within a few minutes after Saini started his speech.

Taking on the erstwhile Bhopinder Singh Hooda-led Congress regime in Haryana, Saini said, "Criticism and comparison, if they have to be done, should also include the phase when they (Congress) were in power."

Since he took charge as

the chief minister one year ago, Haryana witnessed three elections - Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and the recently-held municipal

polls, Saini said. There is a long list of achievements for the BJP to show, Saini said, claiming that ever since he took oath as the chief minister, he worked delicately to serve the people of Haryana, as he spelt out the various initiatives of his government.

The BJP government gave 26,000 jobs, Saini said, prompting Bhopinder Hooda to ask for how long these jobs were held back.

On Congress members staging a walkout soon after the chief minister began his speech, Hooda later told reporters that Saini was not replying to the governor's address, but talking only about his government's achievements.

After the Congress mem-

bers left the House, Saini stepped up the attack on the grand old party on various fronts.

The chief minister said due to the wrong policies of the Congress, the people of Haryana rejected the party which scored a zero in the recent civic polls swept by the BJP.

"When the Congress was in power (in Haryana), it promised to give 100 square yard plots to the poor. But it only remained an announcement, and it was our government which fulfilled it," Saini said.

"The Congress only tells lies and makes false promises to people, and when confronted with truth, they simply run away," the chief minister alleged.

"They don't even listen. The situation will be such that they will not even be in the opposition after 2029," Saini said, adding that when the opposition mem-

bers left the House, Saini stepped up the attack on the grand old party on various fronts.

The chief minister also

Punjab Transport Gets Discounted Diesel, Rs 18 Crore Savings

Chandigarh

The Punjab Transport department on Thursday signed an agreement with Indian Oil Corporation under which the state-owned undertaking buses would get diesel at an enhanced

discounted rate. State transport minister Laljit Singh Bhullar said with this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the state government would save Rs 9 crore per annum.

The MoU was formally exchanged between Rajiv Kumar Gupta, Director State Transport-cum-Managing Director of state-owned Punjab and Ashutosh Gupta, Executive Director and State Head of IOC.

KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS!

HOLI FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2025

For the convenience of rail passengers during HOLI FESTIVAL SEASON-2025, Railways are operating several Special Trains in addition to regular trains. The date wise lists of Special Trains from Delhi area stations is as under-

SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 14.03.2025 (FRIDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS				
Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station To	Arr. Time
04012	Delhi Jn.	19:30	Darbhanga	16:30
04062	Delhi Jn.	23:55	Patna Jn.	16:40
05058	Delhi Jn.	14:00	Gorakhpur Jn.	06:25
03698	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30
04146	Delhi Jn.	09:30	Subedarganj	19:40
04022	New Delhi	14:00	Gorakhpur Jn.	05:00
02436	New Delhi (Vande Bharat Spl)	08:30	Patna Jn. (Vande Bharat Spl)	20:10
04070	Anand Vihar (T)	00:20	Rajgir	19:50
04016	Anand Vihar (T)	00:30	Sitamardi	02:00
03256	Anand Vihar (T)	23:30	Patna Jn.	18:35
05578	Anand Vihar (T)	05:15	Sahasra Jn.	10:30
05204	Anand Vihar (T)	09:20	Muzaffarpur Jn.	05:00
07708	Hazrat Nizamuddin	03:15	Charlapalli	09:30
02982	Hazrat Nizamuddin	06:00	Sogaria	13:10
09726	Shakurbasti	15:50	Dahar Ka Balaji	22:50

SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 15.03.2025 (SATURDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS				
Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station To	Arr. Time
04024	Delhi Jn.	19:30	Varanasi Jn.	09:45
04062	Delhi Jn.	23:55	Patna Jn.	16:40
03698	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30
09004	Delhi Jn.	13:05	Mumbai Delhi	13:30
04081	New Delhi	23:45	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	11:40
02436	New Delhi (Vande Bharat Spl)	08:30	Patna Jn. (Vande Bharat Spl)	20:10
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Rajendra Nagar	07:45
04030	Anand Vihar (T)	09:00	Muzaffarpur Jn.	06:00
05284	Anand Vihar (T)	07:00	Muzaffarpur Jn.	04:50
05306	Anand Vihar (T)	00:20	Chhapra	22:50
01492	Hazrat Nizamuddin	22:10	Pune Jn.	23:55
09726	Shakurbasti	15:50	Dahar Ka Balaji	22:50

SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 16.03.2025 (SUNDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS				
Spl. Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station To	Arr. Time
04020	Anand Vihar (T)	19:30	Barauni Jn.	18:00
04062	Delhi Jn.	23:55	Patna Jn.	16:40
04068	Anand Vihar (T)	14:00	Bhagalpur	13:30
02436	New Delhi (Vande Bharat Spl)	08:30	Patna Jn. (Vande Bharat Spl)	20:10
05578	Anand Vihar (T)	05:15	Sahasra Jn.	10:30
05220	Anand Vihar (T)	08:00	Muzaffarpur Jn.	00:45
02982	Hazrat Nizamuddin	06:00	Sogaria	13:10
09726	Shakurbasti	15:50	Dahar Ka Balaji	22:50
03698	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30
02526	Anand Vihar (T)	17:20	Kamakhya Jn.	03:40
03414	Delhi Jn.	13:35	Malda Town	17:30
02982	Hazrat Nizamuddin	06:00	Sogaria	13:10
01708	Anand Vihar (T)	18:05	Jabalpur Jn.	10:00
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Rajendra Nagar	07:45

Punjab Budget Session from March 21

Komal Ramola Chandigarh

The Punjab Cabinet, under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, has given its approval for summoning the eighth session (Budget Session) of the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha. The session is scheduled to take place from March 21 to March 28.

A decision to this effect was taken during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann at his official residence. According to a spokesperson from the Chief Minister's Office, the Cabinet has recommended the proposal to Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, who holds the authority to officially summon the State Legislature as per Article 174(1) of the Constitution of India.

As per the schedule, the Governor's address will be delivered on March 25, followed by a discussion on the address. Subsequently, the Finance Minister will present the state's budget for the financial year 2025-26 on March 26. A general discussion on the budget will take place thereafter, allowing members to deliberate on financial allocations and government policies for the upcoming year.

In another significant decision, the Cabinet has approved the exemption of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Education Department and British Council Education India Private Limited (BCEIPL) from Section 63(1) of The Punjab Transparency in Public Procurement Act, 2019.



In another significant decision, the Cabinet has approved the exemption of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Education Department and British Council Education India Private Limited (BCEIPL) from Section 63(1) of The Punjab Transparency in Public Procurement Act, 2019.

English communication skills among students, thereby improving their employability prospects. The program benefits approximately 5,000 students from various government colleges across the state each year. The exemption granted by the Cabinet will facilitate the seamless implementation of the program, ensuring that students can continue to avail themselves of this crucial skill-building opportunity without administrative hurdles.

In a move to provide technical education to students and enhance their employability, the Punjab Cabinet has also approved the establishment of 40 Hunar Sikhiya Schools (Schools of Applied Learning) across the state. This initiative is aimed at opening new employment avenues for the youth by equipping them with industry-relevant skills. The government has

earmarked nearly Rs 32 crore for the implementation of this initiative. The schools will offer training in various trades, including Banking, Financial Services and Insurance, Digital Design and Development, Beauty and Wellness, and Healthcare Sciences and Services. Additionally, three foundational courses will be introduced as part of the curriculum. These include Functional English, Career Foundations (covering professionalism, CV creation, soft skills, and professional development), and Technology in Everyday Life (focusing on writing emails, creating work plans, and using digital tools effectively).

By launching these skill development initiatives, the Punjab government aims to bridge the gap between education and employment, equipping students with the necessary tools to secure better job opportunities. The establishment of these schools is expected to play a pivotal role in addressing unemployment and ensuring that students receive practical, hands-on training to thrive in various professional fields.

With these approvals, the Punjab government has reaffirmed its commitment to fostering education, skill development, and economic growth in the state. The upcoming Budget Session will provide a platform for further discussions on these and other crucial policies aimed at the welfare of the people of Punjab.

For any kind of information & detailed time-table etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE Please join us on

Holi Around The World



By Khalid Alvi

that rainbow colours erase social, racial, and religious differences.

La Tomatina, a unique tomato Holi is celebrated in the Valencian town of Bunol, in East of Spain. People sprinkle mashed tomatoes and tomato juice on each other on the last Wednesday of every August. La Tomatina has a very interesting history. It was started accidentally in August 1945 on the occasion of the giant and big head parade when a participant fell off and spectators started throwing vegetables picked from a vegetable stall nearby. The year after this incident, some young men pre-arranged the tomato fight at the same time and even brought their tomatoes. It was enjoyed so much by all that this eventually became an annual tradition. The festival however has had its share of ups and downs as in the early 1950s the 'Tomato Holi' was banned by the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco due to the lack of any religious importance attached to the festival. The participants however refused to give up, kept celebrating and were periodically arrested. After several protests the festival was allowed to be celebrated but in some years, was again banned. As a mark of protest, a tomato burial was organized, where in the citizens carried a coffin with a huge tomato inside. This march was accompanied by a music band playing funeral tunes. The protest was successful and the La Tomatina was finally launched as an official festival.

Kashan Rosewater festival, which is celebrated in the Kashan city in Iran, is very similar to the Indian festival of Holi. The only difference is that instead of colours, rose water is used. It is celebrated in the month of June to celebrate the blooming of the fragrant pink Mohammadi Rose.

Puurs is a small town with a population of sixteen thousand only. This quaint town celebrates Holi in Indian style. The young people of Puurs come together to celebrate as autumn approaches. In the Indian spirit, the people of Puurs also celebrate Holi as the victory of good over evil and douse each other with brilliant colour powders, just like in India. They believe



celebrations. People splashing and pouring water on each other is an established part of the ritual. Customarily, people sprinkle water gently on each other but many young people end up dousing strangers and passers-by bashfully with water, reminiscent of the playfulness of Indian Holi.

Interestingly, Holi has become an integral part of Urs, which is held annually on the death anniversary of spiritual saints like Khwaja Ajmeri and Nizamuddin Aulia at their shrines. On these occasions, it takes the name of Rang. Nizamuddin Aulia started celebrating Holi at his monastery in the spirit of universal brotherhood. The seminal poet Khusrav has also crafted verses on the occasion.

These famous lines are just one among many examples:

Aaj rang hai, maa ri aaj rang hai,

Morey khwaja ke ghar aaj rang hai, Mohey peer payo Nizamuddin aulia (It's the day of colour today, My beloved I have found

in my own abode...)

This tradition of celebrating Holi eventually became an integral part of the Sufi culture. Even in Karachi, Pakistan, it is celebrated with great enthusiasm. It is often said that the Muslims of Karachi are more enthusiastic about the colour splashing festival than their Hindu brethren. In India, there is a long history of Muslims enjoying and participating Holi which has been documented through the various forms of art.

In the Mughal era, since the festival fell close on the heels of the festival of Navroz, over time, the two festivals became closely linked in the minds of the people. Feroze Tughlaq, who is well known and regarded for his role in the preservation of the two and a half million years old Ashoka Pillars, was very fond of Holi celebrations. It is well-documented that most Mughal kings participated in the Indian festivals with great enthusiasm and gusto. Holi and Diwali remained official festivals at the Red Fort till the period of last king Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Historian Zakauilah

writes that Babur was so wonderstruck when he saw people splashing around and celebrating in a pool of coloured water and followed suit by filling a pool with his favourite liquid - wine. Akbar and Bahadur Shah Zafar were famously fond of Holi. Abul Fazal writes in Ain-e-

Akbari that Akbar used to collect beautiful squirts and syringes of different sizes throughout the year in anticipation of the festival. This was one of the rare occasions when Akbar would come out from his fort and play Holi even with the commoners.

Tuzk-e-Jahangiri mentions that Jahangir was so excited about Holi that he played enthusiastically and organized musical gatherings. Jahangir was well-versed with stories of Narsimha, Prahlad and Hiranyakashyapa which are all associated with the spring festival.

Shajahan would watch the Holi celebrations from the jharokha of Red Fort. He also gave it the name Eid-e-Gulabi (the festival of colour). Jashn-e-Aab-Pashi (the festival of spraying water). In the period of

Shah Jahan, a Holi fair was organized near Rajhat, which included pantomimes in which jesters would imitate the king and princes and nobody took offence. Bahadur Shah Zafar went as far as making Holi the official festival of the Red Fort and patronized a new genre of Urdu Poetry called 'Hori', which was sung on the day of Holi.

His poetry collection titled 'Deewan-e-Zafar' contains a separate section called 'Bazan-e-Bhaka (in Hindi)' which includes some poems on Holi too. The Mughal prince Suleman Shukoh migrated to Lucknow and presided over his personal court there. He was so fond of Holi that he would play Kanhayya. Insha, famous for writing Rani Ketki ki Kahani wrote also about Suleman Shukoh's love for the festival in verse form.

Qayam, an eighteenth-century poet, has famously described the playfulness of Holi celebrations in India. Qayam is considered to be such an accomplished poet that Ghalib had also acknowledged him as his Ustad. In his long poem 'Chandpur ki Holi', Qayam paints a scene of an inebriated Maulvi who has forgotten his way to the mosque. This is the state of people on Holi. People from all spheres of life, whether pious or drunkards, celebrate together and collective joy are truly the essence of the festival. The most interesting fact about Holi is that it's still celebrated as 'Rang' at every shrine on the occasion of Urs.

About the Author

(Khalid Alvi is an Urdu poet, Critic and Literary Historian)

Breaking Time Sudoku

What to do

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digit 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only correct solution.

9			6					4
	1	6			2		7	1
4				7		5		
		1	5		6	8		
		5		3				4
	7		9			6	8	
2						8		
	3							2

Solution, Sudoku

8	1	6	3	5	4	9	2	7
2	7	3	8	9	6	4	5	1
9	5	4	1	7	2	8	3	6
1	3	9	2	8	5	6	7	4
5	6	8	7	4	1	3	9	2
4	2	7	6	3	9	1	8	5
7	8	2	4	6	3	5	1	9
3	4	5	9	1	7	2	6	8
6	9	1	5	2	8	7	4	3

THE WISDOM TREE

BY SUVEEN KUMAR

THE LAST ACHIEVEMENT

Your last achievement should be an everlasting achievement. There are tons of things that we want to achieve, there are tons of things that we want to retrieve, there are tons of things that we want to archive, there are tons of things that we want to verbalize, there are tons of things that we want to summarize, but what is that ultimate that you ultimately want to gain, what is that ultimate that you ultimately want to lose, what is that ultimate that you ultimately want little, what is that ultimate that you ultimately want huge. Remember ! not everything you want matters and not everything that matters you would want, not everything that will bring best in you, you bring and not everything that will slowly drown you away, you sink. The quality of your life defined by tons of actions that you never regret taking, the thousands of people you never regret meeting, the set of superlative leaders you never regret greeting. The quality of your life is defined by your loved ones who never unloved

you, your best friends who never abandoned you, the worst enemies who never forsaken you, old parents who never cursed you, the most bosses who never forgotten you, competitive competitors who never underrated you, your inspirations who never overrated you, your soulmates who never cheated you, your crazy fans who never hated you, your teachers who never ashamed of you, your followers who never doubted you, your dreams that never haunted and most importantly your God who never left your side.

Your last achievement must get the best award. Your last achievement is not what you achieve in the end of your life but the achievement after which you don't even long for this life. Your last achievement is your first submission of your next life and the first resignation of this life.

Moral: What you achieve and what you leave shouldn't come by chance, but by your choice.



By Dr Satyavan Saurabh

"Don't mind, it's Holi"

This vibrant festival, known as the festival of colours, has people joyfully throwing coloured powder and water on each other. In Braj, especially in the Mathura-Vrindavan region of Uttar Pradesh, the celebration of Holi is deeply connected to the childhood of Krishna and the stories of Radha and Krishna, with vibrant celebrations lasting for several days. In Anandpur Sahib in Punjab, the day after Holi is filled with festivities, including mock battles by a group of the Sikh community and archery and swordsmanship competitions. As one of the most enthusiastic and joyous Hindu festivals, Holi brings together people from all regions in India. Like many Indian festivals, Holi also has religious significance. The most famous story associated with this celebration is the story of Holika, the sister of Hiranyakashyap.

According to ancient texts, Hiranyakashyap was a demon who was an opponent of Lord Vishnu, yet his son Prahlad was a devoted devotee of Lord Vishnu. To kill his son, Hiranyakashyap conspired with Holika, who had a boon that allowed her to escape fire. However, the result was the opposite of Hiranyakashyap's intentions. When Holika went into the fire with Prahlad, she burned to death, while Prahlad escaped unhurt. This incident



marked the beginning of the Holi festival. In mythology, Lord Krishna is often depicted with dark complexion, while his friend Radha is described as having a fair complexion. This difference caused Krishna to be a little jealous of Radha and he would often express his concerns to his mother Yashoda. One day Yashoda suggested that Krishna should put the color that he liked on Radha's face. So, on the day of Holi, Krishna made Radha wear the color of her choice. Since then the festival of Holi is a vibrant celebration in Krishna's hometown Mathura and Braj.

Holi is celebrated all over India, but it holds special significance

in the North, where it symbolizes the victory of good over evil and the divine nature of love, which promotes brotherhood and harmony. The spirit of 'Bura Na Mano' fills hearts as friends reconcile, clearing misunderstandings. It is a time of collective forgiveness, where people embrace love and forget past grievances. In the days leading up to Holi, people gather wood for bonfires, store grains, coconut and chickpeas to put in the celebratory fire and practice dances. Effigies of Holika are made and delicious seasonal dishes such as gujvia, mathri and malpua are prepared before Holika is burned on Chhoti Holi, the night before the main celebration. Howev-

er, 'Chhoti' and 'Badi' Holi celebrations are celebrated differently across the country. Due to the vastness of India, each region has its own distinct customs and traditions. For example, regions that claim to be the birthplace of Lord Vishnu may celebrate for over two weeks, while in other areas, women hit men's makeshift shields with sticks and, in some places, pots of buttermilk are hung high over the streets for a fun challenge.

During Holi, men and boys form human pyramids to reach a pot of buttermilk and the one who reaches the top of it gets the title of 'King of Holi'. Meanwhile, women and girls try to distract

them by sprinkling water from buckets. Many participants wear old clothes, spread abir on the streets and joyfully sing 'Bura na mano, Holi hai' or 'Narsaj mat he, Holi hai'. Holi is a celebration that reflects the spirit of unity and joy. Although the festival is meant for fun, it should remain respectful and free from indecency. Nowadays, some youths are hiding the true essence of Holi by behaving inappropriately. The use of chemical colors and balloons has diminished the beauty of the festival and unfortunately drinking alcohol has become a common practice during this time. Holi is a holy occasion that invites us to celebrate happiness, so let's make sure it doesn't diminish anyone's happiness.

Celebrate Holi in a safe way that appeals to those around you. Make your celebration full of vibrant and natural colours.

About the Author

(Dr. Satyavan Saurabh, Research Scholar in Political Science, Delhi University)

TOP STORY

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India announces USD 1 billion fund for creators' economy ahead of WAVES summit

New Delhi
The Centre on Thursday announced a USD 1 billion fund to give a boost to the emerging creators' economy in the country and reached out to envoys from over 100 countries seeking their participation in the first World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) to be held in Mumbai.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis hosted the envoys here and sought their presence at the Roundtable of top media CEOs to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the WAVES summit.

India is positioning WAVES to be held from May 1 to 4 as the first convergence platform for

media and entertainment sector on the lines of the World Economic Forum at Davos, a gathering of international leaders from governance and business. Fadnis said Mumbai, the entertainment capital of India, was the perfect permanent venue for the

WAVES summit like Davos is for the World Economic Forum and Cannes is for the eponymous film festival. "The world is already witnessing economic and political rebalancing. This is now moving to its technology and its cultural facets

as well. Real globalisation is not about a single narrative or one truth; it is about capturing the enormous diversity of our people on our planet," Jaishankar said. Vaishnaw announced that a USD 1 billion fund will be created for the creators' economy.

"This fund will be dedicated to ensuring that the energetic creators, who are using the latest technologies, will be able to access capital, hone their skills, upgrade their production levels, and reach the global markets," Vaishnaw said. The minister also announced that the first Indian Institute of Creative Technology will come up in Mumbai and the government of Maharashtra has already allotted land in Film City at Goregaon.

Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju said Jaishankar and Vaishnaw will host the Global Media Dialogue and the Thought Leaders Track will feature plenary sessions and panel discussions by industry leaders. The WAVES Bazaar will be the marketplace offering a content showcase alongside buyer-seller meets to foster business opportunities.

Jaju said the Creatosphere at the WAVES will be a platform for young creators to connect, learn and collaborate through masterclasses, workshops and networking sessions.

Vaishnaw said the 'Create in India Challenge', a precursor to the WAVES, had received over 25 lakh submissions and more than 80,000 creators moved to the next level of the challenge.

Of the 80,000 entries, 1,000 participants will feature in the finals of the various challenges that will be held during the WAVES summit, the minister said.

The vision behind this initiative was to bring together the creative world and modern technological usage to create unique content, he said. Vaishnaw also highlighted that over 100 countries are participating in it and it is a confluence of tech, media and entertainment.

Centre seeks coordination with states to check illegal migration



New Delhi
Underlining that much needs to be done to curb illegal recruitment, the Centre has sought close coordination with all states to tackle the menace of illegal migration. "Only by acting together and in a unified manner, will we be able to tackle the menace of illegal migration," Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said at the Recruiting Agents' Conclave, attended by representatives of various central ministries and state government representatives.

Mr Singh said the government is committed to ensuring that Indians going abroad are highly skilled through continuous up-skilling, re-skilling, and up-skilling efforts. "The Government of India has been making concerted efforts to promote skill-based, safe and legal migration and mobility," he said.

Emphasising the important role that Recruiting Agents play in the emigration process, he observed that they play a crucial role in promoting safe and legal mobility. "However, much needs to be done to curb illegal recruitment taking place on the grounds." Mr Singh said it is incumbent upon the recruiting agents to disseminate safe, legal, and ethical modes of migration and not to find an opportunity in someone's adversarial circumstances. "We do not want our nationals to pursue fake job offers being peddled by unregistered agents. This brings a bad name to the good jobs which the registered recruiting agents are doing and undermines the goodwill which you have generated over the years," he added and appealed to them to come forward and report to the government any instance of illegal recruitment that comes to their knowledge.

The minister said India's passport issuance has almost doubled. This is primarily because India views and approaches the world today as a global workplace. "Facilitating those who travel abroad, either for employment or studies, and looking after their welfare at all times, especially during difficult situations, has become an important objective of our foreign policy," he added.

While the government recognises the invaluable contributions made by Indian migrant workers to India's economy and global reputation, it remains cognizant of the challenges and vulnerabilities that they face in foreign lands, the minister said.

Cong highlights recommendations of Parliament panel calling for legal guarantee for MSP

New Delhi
The Congress on Thursday highlighted a parliamentary standing committee's recommendations of a legal guarantee for MSP and loan waivers for farmers. Congress general secretary Jai Ram Ramesh said that the Parliament Standing Committee of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing under the chairmanship of Charanjit Channi has released its Demand for Grants report for 2025-2026.

"It has made some key recommendations - Reiteration of its earlier recommendations on legal guarantee for MSP and a loan waiver for farmers; extension of MSP to organic crops; financial assistance to farmers for crop residue man-

agement to avoid stubble burning," Ramesh pointed out. The panel has also recommended universal crop insurance for small farmers and renaming the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare as Department of Agriculture, Farmers and Farm Labourers Welfare to acknowledge the role of farm labourers, he said.

The panel has also reiterated its earlier recommendation of incentives for farmers and farm labourers to care for non-productive cattle, Ramesh said. It has called for increasing the procurement limit under the Market Intervention Scheme from the current 25 per cent to 50 per cent of the total estimated production, the Congress leader said.

Karnataka govt mulls raising retirement age for doctors in super-specialty hospitals

Bengaluru
The Karnataka government is actively considering increasing the retirement age of doctors serving in super-specialty hospitals under the medical education department, from the current 60 years to 65.

During an interaction with doctors at Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research on Thursday, Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Sharan Prakash Patil assured medical professionals that the government is keen on extending the retirement age to retain experienced doctors in super-specialty hospitals. The move comes in response to concerns raised by senior doctors at Jayadeva, who pointed out that after



spending nearly 35 years in medical education and training, they only get to serve around 20-25 years before retiring at 60. "We have been deliberating on this issue for some time. To ensure better healthcare services and make the most of our experienced doctors, I will soon

discuss the matter with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and propose raising the retirement age for doctors in super-specialty hospitals," Patil said in a statement issued by his office. In addition, Patil announced a significant benefit for doctors working in the medical education department - an insurance facility. "Currently, these doctors are not covered under any government insurance scheme, but the state is planning to implement Jeevana Sanjivini, a scheme already available under the Health and Family Welfare Department," he said. To further strengthen medical infrastructure, the minister declared that the government would allocate additional funds to Jayadeva Hospital to introduce robotic surgery facilities. "To stay ahead in medical innovation and technology, we are committed to equipping Jayadeva with the latest machines and infrastructure. If Jayadeva cannot have the best, no other hospital in India can," he said.

India, Bangladesh conduct naval exercise in Bay of Bengal to enhance interoperability

New Delhi
India and Bangladesh conducted a naval exercise and coordinated patrol in the Bay of Bengal this week that provided an opportunity for both the navies to develop closer links in tactical planning, coordination and information sharing for undertaking seamless maritime operations. Bongosagar 2025 saw the participation of INS Ranvir from the Indian Navy and BNS Abu Ubaidah from the Bangladesh Navy, officials here said on Thursday. "The enhanced synergy of naval operations between the two navies is the testament to the shared commitment of countering global security chal-



lenges towards security and stability in the region promoting the Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative of India," a spokesperson of the Indian Navy said. The exercise provided an opportunity for both the

navies to develop closer links in tactical planning, coordination and information sharing for undertaking seamless maritime operations, he said. It has "strengthened coordination and confidence" between the two navies, thereby improving the ability to undertake coordinated operations and respond swiftly and effectively against emerging threats at sea, the official said. The exercise enhanced interoperability between the two navies, facilitating collaborative responses to shared maritime security challenges. The exercise involved a range of complex operations encompassing surface firing, tactical manoeuvres, underway replenishment, visit-board-search-seizure (VBSS) cross boarding, communication drills, quiz for operations team and junior officers on professional topics and a steam past.

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TMC MLA's threat to Suwendu Party to decide on action after examining 'all details'

Kolkata
The Trinamool Congress on Thursday said that the party would examine video clips and other details before deciding on taking action against its MLA Humayun Kabir for threatening Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari to show the might of the party's Muslim legislators.

The ruling party of West Bengal also said that it deplores the "hateful comment" of the BJP leader. Adhikari had on Tuesday claimed that if the BJP comes to power in West Bengal in next year's polls, TMC's Muslim MLAs will be thrown out of the state assembly. In response, Kabir gave Adhikari 72 hours to take back his words or face the might of the Muslim MLAs.



"If he talks about throwing out TMC MLAs, we will not treat him with ragulla. It was he who started this spat and not us," the Bhogabapur MLA said. TMC Chief Whip Nirmal Ghosh said the party is examining the video footage where Kabir allegedly made such comments and "take appropriate action after collecting all details." "The party does not endorse any comment which is inappropriate and violates parliamentary decorums. The legislative party will take a call on the issue on May 17," Ghosh said on Thursday. He said TMC deplored the "toxic, divisive and hateful" comments by Adhikari against a particular community and passed a resolution in the West Bengal assembly. "We will not spare our MLAs if they are found to have made objectionable comments in public," the senior TMC leader said. Apart from Kabir, junior minister Siddiquilul Chowdhury had threatened legal action against Adhikari for the comment. "Such a comment has never been thought about, discussed and uttered in Bengal in the past. This is a direct affront to the values of pluralism and secularism," said Chowdhury, also the President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind's state unit.

Why Manipur not on itinerary: Congress on Amit Shah's Assam Mizoram visit

New Delhi
With Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announcing that Union Home Minister Amit Shah would make a three-day visit to his state and Mizoram, the Congress on Thursday asked why Manipur was not on the itinerary. Sarma said the Union home minister would arrive in Jorhat late on Friday for a three-day visit to Assam and Mizoram. Shortly after arriving in Jorhat, the home minister will travel to Dergaon in Golaghat district, where he will spend the night at the Lachit Barphukan Police Academy, Sarma said while briefing reporters. Congress general secretary Jai Ram Ramesh said, "The Assam chief minister has just announced that the Union home minister will be making a three-day visit to Assam and Mizoram, beginning March 14. But why is Manipur not on his itinerary?" "The Congress has been attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well for not visiting Manipur, besides slamming the Centre for its handling of the situation in the ethnic strife-torn northeastern state. The party had on Tuesday taken a swipe at Modi over his Mauritius trip, saying it was "frequent-flyer time" even as the people of Manipur continued to wait for his visit.

BJD ruckus over Polavaram forces adjournments in Odisha assembly

Bhubaneswar
The Odisha Assembly was adjourned multiple times on Thursday due to a din created by the opposition BJD over the controversial Polavaram Dam project in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.



Congress MLAs boycotted the proceedings of the House for the second consecutive day, demanding withdrawal of the suspension order on senior member Taraprasad Bahinipati. An all-party meeting convened by Speaker Surama Padhy to end the Congress boycott also failed to yield any result. Bahinipati was suspended on Tuesday for seven days for "misconduct and unruly behaviour".

As soon as the House assembled for Question Hour, the BJD members rushed to the well and staged a protest after their notice for a discussion on the Polavaram issue was rejected by the Speaker.

They shouted anti-BJP slogans and accused the safe-front party of sacrificing the interest of Odisha for the sake of NDA government's political gains in Andhra Pradesh. Keeping in view the noisy scene in the House, the

Speaker first adjourned the proceeding for about an hour till 11.30 am and later four times till 4 PM. When his party members were shouting in the Well of the House, BJD's deputy leader Prasanna Acharya claimed that Odisha would be severely affected after completion of the Polavaram project. "The Andhra Pradesh government's unilateral and forceful construction of Polavaram project has become intolerable for Odisha. We demand a discussion on the matter," Acharya said. The BJD's notice for a discussion on the project was rejected on the ground that the House cannot debate on

a matter which is sub-judice. Senior BJD MLA Arun Kumar Sahoo said that the Polavaram project's design was changed during the NDA government though it was sanctioned during the UPA regime. "If the matter is sub-judice, how did the BJD-led central government sanction Rs 16,000 crore to Polavaram project in two phases? If the matter is sub-judice, how did the AP government undertake its construction?... Should we wait silently till the dam project inundates Odisha's villages because the matter is sub-judice?" Sahoo said. BJP member Irashish

Acharya justified the Assembly rejecting the notice. "The Rules of the Business of Odisha Legislative Assembly clearly says that the matter under sub-judice cannot be discussed in the House," he said. Meanwhile, the Speaker during the day held an all-party meeting after Congress Legislature Party (CPL) leader Ramachandra Kadam requested her to revoke the suspension order on Bahinipati. "The all-party meeting failed to yield any result as the Speaker has put a condition that Bahinipati will have to tender an apology for his behaviour. We have rejected it and argued that he

has not misbehaved with the Chair. Rather, Bahinipati was hounded, manhandled and verbally abused by BJP MLAs including the Parliamentary Affairs Minister. Where is justice? Our MLA was humiliated and he will say sorry?" Kadam told reporters. Kadam claimed that the Congress MLA was made a victim for raising the issue of rising crimes against women in the Assembly. "We demand formation of a House Committee to inquire into the 54 gangrape cases during the 8 months of BJP rule and a Bill for the protection and safety of women and girls in Odisha," he said.

BJP sweeps local body polls in Mizoram's Chakma council

Aizawl
The BJP, which is in power in the Chakma Autonomous District Council in south Mizoram's Lawngtlai district, on Thursday swept the village council (VC) polls, securing a majority in 64 out of 88 VCs.

According to the final results announced by the state election commission, Mizoram's ruling party, the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), stood second, winning a majority in 12 VCs, while the Mizo National Front (MNF) bagged eight VCs.

The Congress, however, failed to secure a majority in any of the 88 VCs.

There was no clear majority in two VCs, and two others were won by independent candidates, the SEC said.

Out of the 64 VCs where the BJP registered victory, it won nine of those uncontested, the commission said.

polling for the village councils in the CADC was held on Wednesday, registering a voter turnout of 86.97 per cent, it said.

According to the state election commission, there are 516 seats, of which 88 are reserved for women.

The BJP won 366 seats, the ZPM 81, MNF 45 and the Congress two. Twenty-two independent candidates were also declared elected, the SEC said.

The state BJP, in a statement, thanked the people and said it will take steps for development of the region.

Sambhal officer Anuj Chaudhary's father demands security for son

Sambhal
The father of Sambhal Circle Officer Anuj Chaudhary has demanded security for his son, who recently stoked a controversy with his comment on Muslims.

The officer's father, Chaudhary Brijpal Singh, has appealed to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to extend security to his son.

Sambhal Superintendent of Police Krishan Kumar Bishnoi downplayed his concern.

Addressing reporters on Thursday, Bishnoi said the police were fully equipped to ensure security for everyone, including officers like Anuj Chaudhary.

"Our duty is to protect all citizens. Parents should feel assured that their children in the police force are serving society with dedication," he said.

"If our own parents become anxious, it does not reflect well on the morale of the police force. I want to assure all parents that there is no threat to anyone's security. We provide protection to the public, and our own force remains well-guarded," Bishnoi said.

Chaudhary earlier courted controversy with his remark that there are 52 Fridays in a year but only one Holi, as he advised Muslims to not venture out on the day if they wanted no colour be thrown at them.

The comment sparked a political storm, with opposition parties accusing the administration of "insensitivity and bias" against Muslims.

CM Dhami celebrates Holi milan with folk artists, showcases rich cultural heritage

Pawan Lalchand Dehradun
The Chief Minister's residence in Uttarakhand transformed into a vibrant cultural hub as Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami hosted a grand Holi Milan celebration with folk artists from across the state. The event, a confluence of tradition, music, and dance, showcased the rich cultural heritage of Uttarakhand and brought together artists from Garhwal, Kumaon, and Jansari, each representing the unique essence of their respective regions.

The celebration, held on Thursday, was marked by an electrifying display of folk music and dance, filling the air with the festive spirit of Holi. Traditional instruments like the dhol, manjira, and thali resonated through the open courtyard, creating a mesmerizing atmosphere. Folk artists, clad in traditional attire, added vibrancy to the festivities with their soulful performances, embodying the joyous spirit of the festival of colors.

Among the most captivating performances of the evening was the electrifying presentation by the cultural troupe from the Rath region of Pauri district. The Rath Region Art Committee, led by Prem Singh Negi, enchanted the audience with their folk Holi songs that have long been cherished in Uttarakhand's musical tradition. Their melodious rendition of "Aai Dandi, Basanti, Dali Ma Maulyar" eloquently captured the essence of spring's arrival, immersing the listeners in a wave of nostalgia and festivity. The heartfelt performance resonated deeply with the audience, earning widespread admiration and applause.

Equally enthralling was the performance by folk artists from Almora, whose spirited rendition of "Aao Dagaadlyo, Nacha Gawa, Aa Gayi Rangili Holi" captivated the spectators. Their dynamic movements and rhythmic precision brought to life the essence of Holi, weaving an enchanting narrative of joy and togetherness. As the night progressed, multiple folk groups took to the stage, each adding their unique contribution to the kaleidoscope of performances that celebrated Uttarakhand's cultural richness.

The traditional Haru dance by Jansari artists infused the event with grace and enthusiasm, while the women of Lohaghat rendered melodious Holi songs, their voices harmonizing beautifully with the beats of folk instruments. Their distinctive rhythmic style added depth to the celebrations, leaving a lasting impression on the audience. Further elevating the energy of the evening was the performance by the Tharu tribe, along with the renowned Chholya dance from Almora, which electrified the atmosphere with its dynamic and vigorous execution.

Adding another dimension to the evening's grandeur was the special presentation by the Shivindhi Self-Help Group from Lohaghat. The 54-member ensemble captivated the audience with their remarkable Holi-themed performance, which was met with rapturous applause. Speaking about their participation, the group's leader, Alka, expressed immense joy, calling it a significant milestone for their artistic journey and an honor to perform at the Chief Minister's residence.



The festivities reached a pinnacle when Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami himself immersed in the celebrations, engaging with the folk artists in a display of unity and camaraderie. In a heartwarming moment, the Chief Minister danced alongside the artists, enthusiastically partaking in the revelry and even attempting to play traditional instruments like the dhol and thali. His spirited participation was met with appreciation from the attendees, who lauded his commitment to preserving and promoting the state's rich cultural heritage for generations to come.

Holi Celebrated with Great Pomp in Mandi

Rajan Puncthi Mandi
The festival of colors, Holi, was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm in Mandi, as thousands of young men, women, and children took to the streets to drench each other in vibrant hues. The historical Seri Chanani turned into a sea of colors as revelers, covered in abir and gulaal, danced to the beats of Punjabi, Bollywood, and Pahadi music, creating an atmosphere of pure jubilation.

Further enhancing the evening's cultural significance was the spectacular performance by the Veer Shiromani Maharana Pratap Tharu Upliftment Committee from Khatima. Representatives Banty Rana and Rinku Rana praised the Chief Minister's efforts in fostering Uttarakhand's folk traditions, acknowledging his unwavering support in bringing the state's cultural heritage to the forefront.

The Holi Milan event at the Chief Minister's residence was much more than a celebration of colors; it was a profound testament to the unity, diversity, and artistic wealth of Uttarakhand. The vibrant hues of abir and gulaal filled the air, symbolizing the harmony and cultural pride that define the region. The overwhelming participation and enthusiasm of the artists and spectators transformed the event into an unforgettable spectacle, ensuring that the festival of Holi was celebrated in its most authentic and exuberant form. The evening stood as a grand tribute to Uttarakhand's folk heritage, reinforcing the importance of preserving and promoting the state's rich cultural traditions for generations to come.

Women actively participated in the revelry, ensuring they were not left behind in the celebrations. The stairs of the Seri Pavilion were occupied by young women who swayed to the beats of high-energy songs, reveling in the sheer joy of the moment. The vibrant gulaal floating in the air painted a mesmerizing scene, making it seem as if a colorful cloud was hovering over the enthusiastic crowd.

Music on Punjabi beats, Bollywood chartbusters, and Pahadi Naatis has always been a special attraction of Mandi's Holi celebrations, and this year was no different. Following the grand procession of Rajdevta Madhorai during Shivratri, the Holi celebration at Seri Pavilion witnessed an unprecedented gathering of young men and women so massive that even the roads surrounding the venue were packed with eager participants.

As soon as the DJ started playing, the energy level of the crowd skyrocketed. Thousands of young men and women danced in sync, letting loose in the festive euphoria. Some of the more enthusiastic participants even ripped their shirts in Salman Khan-style frenzy, adding to the electrifying atmosphere. The dance and celebrations continued for hours, with people fully immersing themselves in the festival's infectious joy.

Women in groups were also seen in different corners of the market, playfully applying colors to friends and acquaintances, spreading happiness all around. The city resonated with laughter, music, and cheers as people embraced the spirit of Holi in its purest form.

Mandi's Holi celebration this year was yet another testament to the city's cultural vibrancy and communal harmony. As the festival concluded, the colorful streets and beaming faces of the participants stood as a reminder of the unforgettable day filled with love, unity, and boundless enthusiasm.

CM Adityanath urges people to celebrate Holi in harmony avoid forcing colours

Gorakhpur (UP)
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday appealed to people to celebrate Holi in harmony by following the centuries-old traditions of Sanatan Dharma. Speaking at the Bhakt Prahlad Shobha Yatra organised by the Holika Dahan Utsav Samiti here at Pandeyhata, the chief minister also said Holika Dahan should symbolise the burning away of ego and negative tendencies.

Adityanath's remarks assume significance in view of the controversies over Holi celebrations and Friday prayers coinciding on Friday.

Muslims of Sambhal in UP have decided to hold Jamma Namaz (Friday prayers) at 2:30 pm because of Holi. The city has been tense after riots broke out on November 24 last year following a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid. Four people were killed and several including police personnel were injured in the clashes.

Adityanath emphasised that festivals bring greater joy when celebrated with mutual respect and urged people not to forcibly apply colours on others, especially those who are unwell.

"People should celebrate Holi in harmony, following the centuries-old traditions of Sanatan Dharma. Festivals bring greater joy when celebrated with mutual respect," he said.

Highlighting the success of the recently concluded Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, Adityanath said the event showcased the strength of Sanatan Dharma to the world.

"Maha Kumbh has become the grand festival of discipline in religion. Over 66 crore devotees gathered at the Sangam over 45 days, demonstrating unparalleled discipline, unity and goodwill," he said.

CM Adityanath said people from all Indian states and over 100 countries including diplomats, ministers and religious leaders participated in the Maha Kumbh. The president, vice president, prime minister, governors, chief ministers, Supreme Court and high court judges, and dignitaries from various fields expressed their desire to visit and did so, he added.

All municipal corporations will be developed as solar cities: CM Yogi

Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday announced plans to transform all 17 municipal corporations in the state into solar cities.

He said Ayodhya has been developed as the first solar city with a 6,000-megawatt solar energy capacity, while Bundelkhand is being transformed into a 5,000-megawatt green corridor.

The CM was addressing the closing session of a national conference organized by the municipal corporation as part of the National Clean Air Program (NCAP). The conference, held at a hotel in Gorakhpur, focused on the theme "Roadmap to Make Gorakhpur Free from Open Waste Burning by 2027." During this, he quoted Mahatma Gandhi, saying "Nature can meet everyone's needs but cannot satisfy anyone's greed."

He mentioned that a combination of technology and public awareness is essential to minimize carbon emissions and protect the environment. Speaking about India's commitment to sustainability, he highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. He stressed that "to achieve this goal, efforts must be strengthened at both national and local levels."

The Chief Minister also underscored the importance of public participation in environmental initiatives. "No movement can succeed without the involvement of the people," he said, urging public representatives to actively engage people in these programs.

He recalled the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, stating, "The consequences of a harmful nature were evident during COVID-19. In the second wave, people suffered just like a fish struggling when taken out of water." He warned that human-induced environmental damage will ultimately impact humanity itself.

Discussing the state government's efforts to cut carbon emissions, CM Yogi highlighted a major energy-saving initiative. "Since 2017, we have replaced 17 lakh halogen streetlights with LED lights across the state, without spending a single rupee," he said.

He explained that halogen lights not only consumed more energy but also contributed significantly to carbon emissions. The transition to LED lights has reduced carbon emissions, saved energy, and helped municipal bodies save Rs 1,000 crore, as the companies installing the LED lights were paid from the energy savings.

The Chief Minister emphasized the government's commitment to environmental protection, citing the ban on single-use plastics as a key step. To provide an eco-friendly alternative and support traditional artisans, the government implemented the Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana, promoting clay products. Under this scheme, potters were given electric and solar-powered wheels, which not only reduced plastic waste but also created new employment opportunities.



CM Yogi Adityanath addressing a national conference on environmental protection in Gorakhpur. He emphasized the government's commitment to sustainability and reducing carbon emissions through initiatives like LED streetlights and solar energy.

SP moots 'Paan par charcha' to strengthen minorities, Dalits

Lucknow
Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday mooted a new strategy to strengthen its PDA (Pichhara, Dalit, Aposhchhaya) by holding "Paan pe Charcha."

Installing a statue of Shiv Prasad Chaurasia at ShivFront here, he said the Chaurasia community has taken a pledge to hold a meeting and discuss on paan.

He said that now the Chaurasia Samaj will discuss on paan and eliminate the BJP from the state in 2027. He claimed that backward, Dalit, tribal, women and all our minority brethren have made up their minds that they will carry forward the strength of PDA.

"Right now, the BJP is spreading hatred against Muslim society. In the coming time, PDA will stop hatred against society. The BJP has created a new strategy not to let anyone vote, he alleged.

After congratulating the people on Holi festival, the SP President attacked the Yogi Adityanath government taunting that CM saying he is "Teesmar Khan" and has big love for the number 30.

"Thirty people were killed in the Kumbh stampede and in Kumbh, Rs 30 crore business was done," he commented.

He added that communal statements by BJP legislators were intentionally done to divert the attention from real issues.

Security beefed up across Rajasthan ahead of Holi Ramzan Friday prayers

Jaipur
Security arrangements have been beefed up across Rajasthan ahead of Holi and Ramzan's Friday prayers to maintain law and order in the state.

Peace committee meetings were held in various districts for celebrating the two festivals in a peaceful manner.

The Holi festival on March 14 coincides with Friday prayers during the holy month of Ramzan.

Taking a lead for harmony and brotherhood in Alwar district, Muslim Meo community leader Sher Khan has announced to hold the Jamma Namaz (Friday prayers) at 2 pm instead of 1:30 pm tomorrow.

In a statement, Rajasthan DGP Utkal Ranjan Shrivastava said the festivals give us the message of goodwill, harmony, mutual love and brotherhood.

"The policemen of the state always perform their duty with committing to that you and all take extra vigilance regarding civil security and law and order."

Due to the security



Police officers in uniform standing in a line, likely at a security checkpoint or during a patrol in Rajasthan.

arrangements in the border areas of the state. Tight security arrangements have been made from the capital to the remote border areas.

Strict security checks are being done at the airport, bus station and railway station. At the same time, intensive checking is also being carried out in hotels and guest houses besides strict monitoring on social media.

Karauli District Collector Neelabh Saxena chaired a peace committee meeting in the district for celebrating Holi and Ramzan festival peacefully.

In Kota, law and order situation will be monitored through drones. In Kaithun town, a procession is also proposed tomorrow so additional police has been deployed and videography will also be done, the police said.

Jaipur Additional Commissioner (Law and Order) Rameshwar Singh said 11 Additional DCPs, over 40 Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACPs), nearly 80 Circle Inspectors, about 1500 constabulary will take charge of security arrangements.

Interim govt in Bangladesh extends military's magistracy power

Dhaka — Bangladesh's interim government led by Muhammad Yunus on Thursday extended the magistracy power of the military forces for 60 more days for the third time amid a nationwide law and order situation. "Commissioned officers holding the rank of captain and above in the Bangladesh Armed Forces have been granted special executive magistracy powers across the country," a Public Administration Ministry statement said here.

According to the statement, navy and air force officers too would hold the authority of executive magistracy while performing duties in aid of civil administration, including the military and navy officers serving on deputation in paramilitary Bangladesh Coast Guard and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB). The renewal of the government order came as a nationwide operation called Operation Devil Hunt is underway as the country vandalism afresh since February 5. Protestors that day first demolished the 32 Dhanmondi residence of Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman using excavators coinciding with a scheduled virtual speech by his daughter and deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina from India, where she fled last year after the students' massive protest that ousted her Awami League government.

UN chief in Bangladesh for first-hand look at Rohingya camps as he pushes for aid

Dhaka — UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is getting a first-hand look at the situation of more than 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as fears mount of serious aid cuts across the world following Washington's decision to shut down USAID operations. Bangladesh's foreign affairs adviser, Toubid Hossain, welcomed Guterres at Dhaka's main airport on Thursday. Guterres's four-day visit — his second to Bangladesh — is seen as crucial after the announcement of possible aid cuts by the World Food Programme, or WFP, and others in the aftermath of the USAID shut down.

Bangladesh's interim government, which came to power last August after a mass uprising ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina — hopes the visit will boost international efforts to mobilise aid for the Rohingya refugees



Bangladesh's foreign affairs adviser, Toubid Hossain, welcomed Guterres at Dhaka's main airport on Thursday.

and attract new global attention to their crisis. A letter from the UN food agency earlier this month said cuts to food rations could take effect from next month at Cox's Bazar, home to dozens of camps housing Rohingya refugees. The WFP said the food rations could be reduced to USD 6, from the current USD 12.50

per month — unless adequate funding is secured. According to WFP spokesperson Kun Li, if the WFP is unable to secure sufficient funding — USD 81 million to sustain operations through the end of the year, including USD 15 million needed for April — it will have no choice but to reduce rations starting in April.

Ahead of Guterres' visit, Amnesty International urged the international community to urgently step up and deliver the necessary support to avoid the devastating impact on the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. "The funding shortfall will only exacerbate the existing desperate short-

Bangladesh's foreign affairs adviser, Toubid Hossain, welcomed Guterres at Dhaka's main airport on Thursday. Guterres's four-day visit — his second to Bangladesh — is seen as crucial after the announcement of possible aid cuts by the World Food Programme, or WFP, and others in the aftermath of the USAID shut down.

age of essential supplies and services in the camps," said Smriti Singh, regional director for South Asia at Amnesty International. "The Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar have little alternative but to rely on WFP aid," Singh said, adding that the Bangladesh government prohibits the refugees from leaving the camps and finding jobs. Agency

India gifts urgently-needed medicine to Sri Lanka

Colombo — India has donated urgently-needed medicines to Sri Lanka responding to an urgent request from Colombo, the Indian High Commission said here on Thursday.

India gifted 50,000 ampoules of Furosemide injection 20mg/2ml to cater to its shortage in Sri Lankan hospitals in the immediate term. These were handed over by Santosh Jha, the High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, to the Minister of Health and Mass Media Nalinda Jayatissa. "India has been a reliable friend and first responder for Sri Lanka during times of difficulties and shortages, including in the health sector," a release from the Indian High Commission said.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, India supplied over 25 tonnes of medicines on a special aircraft to Sri Lan-

ka in May 2020; gifted 5,00,000 doses of Covishield vaccine in January 2021; and 1 lakh Rapid Antigen Test kits in February 2022, it said.

In the wake of the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, in February 2022, a USD 1 billion credit facility for supply of essential items, including medicines, was extended in March 2022 for a period of one year. It was subsequently extended until March 2024 on the request of the Sri Lankan government.

"Over 26 tonnes of drugs and other medical supplies were provided to Peradeniya University Hospital, Jaffna Teaching Hospital, Hambantota General Hospital, among others, in April-May 2022 to meet the acute shortage of medicines," the release said. The health sector has also been an important focus area for India's development cooperation initiatives in Sri Lanka.

Belgian prosecutors make arrests in corruption probe linked to European Parliament

Brussels — Belgian federal prosecutors announced Thursday the arrests of several people as part of a corruption probe linked to the European Parliament amid reports in local media that Chinese company Huawei bribed EU lawmakers.

About 100 federal police officers carried out 21 searches in Brussels, the Flanders and Wallonia regions, and Portugal, the federal prose-

cutor's office said. The suspects were arrested for questioning in "connection with their alleged involvement in active corruption within the European Parliament, as well as for forgery and use of forgeries," prosecutors said. "The offences were allegedly committed by a criminal organisation."

According to an investigation by Le Soir newspaper and other media, lobbyists working for Chinese telecoms giant



Huawei are suspected of bribing current or former European Parliament members to promote the company's commercial policy in Europe.

Huawei public relations representatives in London did not respond to an emailed request for comment and could not be reached by phone. The European Parliament said only that the assembly "takes note of the information" and when requested, "always cooperates fully with the judicial authorities."

Some European nations have followed Washington's lead and banned Huawei's equipment from next-generation mobile networks over allegations that it poses a security risk that could help facilitate Chinese spying. The company has repeatedly denied this. European Commission spokesman Thomas Regnier said the EU's executive branch had no comment regarding the investigation but underlined security con-

cerns the commission has about Huawei and Europe's 5G telecoms networks. "The security of our 5G networks is obviously crucial for our economy," Regnier told reporters. "Huawei represents materially higher risks than other 5G suppliers," he said, adding that EU member states should swiftly "adopt decisions to restrict or to exclude Huawei from their 5G networks." Agency

BUSINESS

Sebi Expands UPSI Scope: Fundraising, Restructuring

New Delhi: Markets regulator Sebi has widened the ambit of the scope of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) by including any proposed fundraising, restructuring agreements which can impact the management or control of the company, restructuring plans, and one-time bank settlements.

The move is aimed at enhancing regulatory clarity, certainty and uniformity in compliance in the ecosystem.

To give this effect, Sebi, in a notification issued on March 11, amended insider trading regulations. The new rules would come into force from June 10.

In its notification, Sebi said that any proposed fundraising activity, upward or downward revisions in credit ratings, other than ESG ratings, and agreements affecting the management or control of the company would be considered as UPSI.

Further, developments relating to corporate insolvency processes, including the

clearance of resolution plans, one-time settlements, or restructuring of loans and borrowings from banks or financial institutions would fall under the UPSI ambit.

Sebi said that fraud or defaults by the company, its promoter, director, key managerial personnel, or subsidiary or arrest of key managerial personnel, promoter or director of the company, whether occurred within India or abroad would be classified as UPSI.

Any initiation of forensic audit report; with regards to financial misstatements, signing of, or diversion of funds by the company would come under the scope of UPSI.

Any action initiated or orders passed with- in India or abroad, by regulatory, statutory, enforcement authority or judicial body against the company or its directors, key managerial personnel, promoter or subsidiaries would be categorised as UPSI.

RBI to Set Up 'On Tap' Cohort on Climate Change Risks

New Delhi — The Reserve Bank will set up a dedicated 'On Tap' cohort on climate change risks and sustainable finance under its regulatory sandbox initiative, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Thursday.

The Reserve Bank has been encouraging and facilitating innovations through its Regulatory Sandbox and Hackathon initiatives in the fintech space.

"We propose to set up a dedicated 'On Tap' cohort on climate change risks and sustainable finance under RBI's Regulatory Sandbox initiative. We are also planning to conduct a special 'Greenathon' on climate change and related aspects," Malhotra said.

He was speaking on the Policy Seminar on Climate Change Risks and Finance organised by the Reserve Bank of India here.

The Governor said there are two dimensions to climate



change-related risks that regulators, policymakers and practitioners have to be aware of — the first is facilitative involving capacity building, development of the ecosystem and financing of green and sustainable transition; and the second is the prudential aspect, which is related to risk management.

"While the role of the Central Banks in managing risks posed by climate

change to the financial system is increasingly being recognised, their role in facilitating the financing of green and sustainable transition has been a matter of debate and has varying dimensions to it," he said.

Central banks in advanced economies have traditionally followed an asset-neutral approach. Central banks in emerging markets and developing economies

(EMDEs), on the other hand, have adopted directed lending policies to channelise credit to certain sectors of their economies given their individual country circumstances and developmental objectives.

In the Indian context, the priority sector lending guidelines facilitate credit to be channelled to specific sectors including renewable energy. "On the prudential

aspect, there are several channels through which climate change risks impact the financial system. All the major types of financial risks — be it credit, market, or operational risk — are influenced by climate change," Malhotra said.

As a central bank, he said the RBI is mindful of its role in addressing and mitigating risks to the financial system from climate change. "In this context, our endeavour has been to play the role of a facilitator — including supporting capacity building and fostering a conducive regulatory framework for promoting green and sustainable finance," he said. Agency

AZAD Engineering unveils

Hyderabad — Azad Engineering, a leader in precision engineering, marked a significant milestone today with the inauguration of its Exclusive Lean Manufacturing Facility for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) at Tunkibollaram, Hyderabad. The 7,200 sq. mts. state-of-the-art facility was inaugurated by Mr. Masahito Kataoka, Sr. Vice President, GTCC Business Division, Energy System, MHI, Japan; Mr. Jayesh Rangan, Special Chief Secretary of Industries & Commerce and Information

Technology, Government of Telangana; and Mr. Rakesh Chopdar, Chairman and CEO of Azad Engineering.

The inauguration was also attended by distinguished guests including Mr. Praveen P A, Director, Aerospace & Defence, Director BFSI at Government of Telangana; Mr. Raja Ram Reddy, Engineering Manager, Turbine Engineering, MHI, Japan; Mr. Hiroryuki Oka, Deputy General Manager, Procurement, MHI, Japan; Mr. Hitoshi Morimoto, Deputy General Manager, Supply Chain Man-

India's first lean facility for MHI, bags global 'Partner of the Year'



agreement, MHI, Japan; and Mr. Shane Mickey, Senior Vice President,

North American Manufacturing, MHI, USA. This lean manufacturing

facility marks a major milestone in Azad Engineering's decade-long

partnership with MHI. The journey that began with a few machines in 2012 has now evolved into a world-class manufacturing centre, demonstrating a shared commitment to excellence. This development follows Azad's signing of the Long-Term Contract & Price Agreement (LTCPA) with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Limited, Japan on November 3, 2024. Key highlights of the facility are that it currently employs 200 skilled professionals, with ongoing activities expected to add several hundred

more skilled professionals in the near future. It also features cutting-edge technology for high-precision components, integrates with Azad's Centre for Excellence and Innovation and strengthens India's position in global manufacturing. Expressing his appreciation, Mr. Masahito Kataoka, Sr. Vice President, GTCC Business Division, Energy System, MHI, Japan, said: "As a leading company in gas turbines and steam turbines, MHI provides innovative technologies and solutions to contribute to global goals."

Datta Power Infra Group Signs PPA with SJVN Limited for 70-MW Wind Power Project

New Delhi — Datta Power Infra Group has signed a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with SJVN Limited for its 70-MW Wind Power Project, a significant addition to SJVN's WIND initiative, which aims to develop 600 MW of ISTS-connected wind power projects across India.

This agreement represents a key milestone in India's transition to renewable energy, reinforcing the country's commitment to expanding clean energy capacity.

Mr. Varchasvi Gagal, Managing Director & CEO of Datta Power Infra, said: "We are proud to collaborate with SJVN Limited on this landmark 70-MW wind power project, which is a significant step toward strengthening India's renewable energy ecosystem. This partnership underscores our commitment to accelerating the transition to clean energy while contributing to the nation's ambitious sustainability goals. At Datta Power Infra, we are focused on expanding our renewable energy footprint, and this project aligns with our vision of building a robust 1-GW pipeline in India. We look forward to leveraging our expertise and innovative solutions to drive impactful progress in the sector."

Advt Contact: 9818-799941

Cricket

66 Mumbai Indians, with such experienced players, you wouldn't expect these errors": Mithali Raj



"Lot to learn from him as a character": RR skipper Sanju Samson on Rahul Dravid's leadership

Jaipur (Rajasthan) Rajasthan Royals (RR) captain Sanju Samson hailed the former Indian skipper and head coach Rahul Dravid's leadership ability and opened up on what he is trying to learn from it, the franchise's official site reported.

Head coach Dravid and captain Samson will be reuniting in RR colours in the Indian Premier League (IPL) this year, with the first match at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad against the Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) on March 23.

Speaking on Dravid's influence, Samson hailed Dravid's ability to lead others by example, both on and off the field.

"There is a lot to learn from him as a character," Samson, the Royals' captain for IPL 2025, said in a JioHotstar special, as quoted by RR's official website.

Dravid was the captain of the RR



side, as a part of which Samson made his IPL debut in 2013. The season was a breakthrough one for

the batter, who scored 206 runs in 10 innings with a half-century. Dravid led India in 25 Tests and



79 ODIs, with win percentages of 57.14 and 56 per cent respectively and his leadership skills are

regarded highly till this day. As a head coach, Dravid earned his first-ever ICC title, the T20 World Cup 2024, partnering with Indian skipper Rohit Sharma and achieving another big high as a leader.

Samson also credited Dravid for giving him a lot of learnings during his initial mentorship stint with RR in 2014 season of the league, saying, "All the small instances, how he used to treat the young people, how he used to take care of the seniors, how he communicates, how he talks during meetings. All those things, I quietly observed, and I feel like somewhat I do the same thing."

The current RR skipper also revealed an exchange with Dravid that has stayed in his mind and inspired him to follow Dravid's footsteps.

"When he came back, he asked me, 'Sanju, what do you stand for in this franchise?' and I told him, 'Sir, it's very easy, I just continued from where you left,' he concluded.

Punjab Kings begin training camp at Dharamsala ahead of IPL 2025

Dharamsala

Marking the commencement of the preparations for the upcoming season 18 of the Indian Premier League, Punjab Kings (PBKS) have begun their training camp at the picturesque Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) stadium in Dharamsala.

The camp has been designed to fine-tune the team's strategy ahead of the tournament as the players train under the coaching staff to get in the groove.

The camp has been scheduled from March 12 to March 15 in Dharamsala and will be attended by key Indian players, including wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan, all-rounder Shaheer Khan, and veteran leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal. Head coach Ricky Ponting, Assistant coach Brad Haddin and Fast bowling coach James Hopes will also be joining the team at HPCA.

Revealing the reason behind selecting Dharamsala as the training ground, head coach Ricky Ponting said as quoted from a press release by Punjab Kings, "It feels great to come here and a lot of the guys haven't played at this ground and we've got three games in a row at the back end of the tournament here. So the thinking behind deciding to come here was to give the boys a bit of a feel of this ground."

He added, "We'll make the most of the training days here, and then we've got the possibility of five or six days training in Chandigarh."

The camp will then move to Mullanpur from March 16 and will be joined by Captain Shreyas Iyer and Arshdeep Singh, who were a part of the 2025 Champions Trophy-winning Indian squad in Dubai. The squad, led by Iyer, will train at PBKS's home ground, the new PCA stadium, and will also feature international players like Marcus Stoinis, Glenn Maxwell, Marco Jansen and Lockie Ferguson, among others.

Earlier, the team also organized four training camps for the players to get acclimatized to the playing conditions and strengthen team bonding. While one camp took place in Mumbai in the first week of January, two camps were organised in Chandigarh. This was followed by a fourth camp in Dharamsala in the first week of March. PBKS will begin their IPL campaign on March 25 against the Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi International Stadium. After playing another away game against Lucknow Super Giants, the team will return to Mullanpur to play two back-to-back home matches against Rajasthan Royals and Chennai Super Kings.

IPL 2025: Mitchell Marsh cleared to play for LSG only as batter

New Delhi

Australia T20 skipper Mitchell Marsh has been cleared to play for Lucknow Super Giants only as a batter in the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025, according to ESPNcricinfo.

Marsh is set to travel early next week despite missing out on the recently concluded Champions Trophy due to a back injury. The 33-year-old all-rounder was ruled out of Australia's ODI tour of Sri Lanka and the Champions Trophy due to "lower back pain and dysfunction."

According to ESPNcricinfo, Marsh went to see a back specialist in early February and underwent a period of rest to resolve the problem. In recent weeks, he returned to batting and has been cleared to play in the IPL for LSG only as a batter.

In the mega auction held last year in Jeddah, LSG acquired him for Rs 33 crore. Marsh is expected to join the LSG camp on March 18, where he will reunite with his former head coach, Justin Langer, who is set to enter his second season with the franchise.

Marsh has not played competitive cricket since January 7. His last appearance was in the Big Bash League (BBL) for the Perth Scorchers, and he was rested for the final two matches of



the competition.

Before BBL, he made his last appearance in the white-ball format during Australia's tour of the UK in September.

Before getting picked by LSG, Marsh represented the Delhi Capitals in the last three IPL seasons. His time in the cash-rich league has been riddled with injuries. In the last edition of the cash-rich league, he sustained an injury in his hamstring after four games and returned home to rehab.

Meanwhile, Australia's famed pace trio Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, who missed the Champions Trophy, are expected to be fit for the tournament.

Virat Kohli, PR Sreejesh among speakers at RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit season 2

Bengaluru

What's common between Virat Kohli and Moya Dodd? Both have challenged the norm and championed reform in their respective fields.

While both Kohli and Dodd come from very different tracks in the sporting universe, they will be among the speakers present when the curtains are raised at Season 2 of the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit Powered by Leaders.

The RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit Powered by Leaders, which unfolds on March 14 and 15 in Bengaluru at the Padukone Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence, is in its second edition after the remarkable success of the Leaders partnering in India for the first time in November 2023.

The summit is designed to drive conversations around sports policy, development, the importance of a public-private partnership, and the four pillars—commerce, Technology, Performance, and Social Impact—that are essential in the evolution of a robust sporting ecosystem.

The discourse from the RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit also serves as the basis for a Sports-Forward Nation, with the eventual goal of India becoming a sporting powerhouse by the



2036 Summer Olympics.

Narrating, driving, and adding to the discourse will be the likes of former cricketers Dinesh Karthik, Isa Guba and RCB's Director of Cricket Mo Bobat. Along with them, present on the august occasion will be international sports icon and RCB cricketer Virat Kohli, two-time Olympic medalist and former India hockey player PR Sreejesh, Jayant Chaudhary, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Nick Brown, FIFA, Moya Dodd, former FIFA Executive Committee Member and Board of Sports Governance Expert, Karthik Balagopalan, MD and CEO, PUMA, Siddharth Patel, Managing Partner, CVC

KL Rahul reflects on DC's "solid" squad; reveals emotions he felt during mega auction

New Delhi

Delhi Capitals wicketkeeper batter KL Rahul revealed the emotions he felt when his name came up in last year's mega auction and his opinion on the franchise's team combination ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025.

After spending three seasons as Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) skipper, Rahul parted ways with the franchise and enrolled his name for the mega auction.

Following a fierce bidding war between Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Delhi Capitals (DC) entered the action and got an opener, captain and wicketkeeper-batter option in Rahul for a hefty sum of Rs 14 crore.

"The auction was a nerve-wracking experience. As a player, not knowing which team you will end up with is never easy. Over the years, I've seen how unpredictable auctions can be—there's no fixed pattern to how things unfold. Having been a captain for the last three seasons, I have been actively involved in the process of building a team," Rahul told JioStar.

Rahul, who was overwhelmed with feelings of anxiousness, nervousness, and excitement, was happy to join the Capitals and is now looking ahead to the new season.

"I understand the kind of pressure franchises face when assembling a squad. But from a player's perspective, it's even tougher because your career is at stake. The auction



can shape a player's future or present unexpected challenges. I was definitely nervous, even a little anxious. But at the same time, I knew this was the right step for my career. There was excitement too, though it didn't last very long because reality sets in quickly," he said.

"I'm really happy to be joining the Delhi Capitals. Parth Jindal, the team's owner, is a close friend, and we have spent a lot of time outside of cricket discussing various things. I know how passionate he is about the sport, and I'm thrilled to be a part of this team. We have a strong squad, and I'm looking forward to the season ahead," he added.

While analysing the depth of the squad, Rahul admits it is a "solid" team and is "excited" to play alongside skilled stars, including Mitchell Starc, Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav.

"This will be a new experience for me, joining a new franchise, possibly my fourth or fifth team in the IPL. I feel both excited and a little nervous. Every time you step into a new team environment, a lot of thoughts cross your mind, how the players will be, how the owners run the team, how the fans will respond, all of that. So, it's a mix of emotions. Looking at the squad and how the management has built

"I'm really happy to be joining the Delhi Capitals. Parth Jindal, the team's owner, is a close friend, and we have spent a lot of time outside of cricket discussing various things. I know how passionate he is about the sport, and I'm thrilled to be a part of this team. We have a strong squad, and I'm looking forward to the season ahead," he added.

the team, it looks like a well-balanced side with most areas covered," he said.

"There's a great combination of experienced players and young talent, and I'm excited to play alongside some incredibly skilled youngsters and learn from them as well. With players like Mitchell Starc, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, many of whom I have played with before, we have a solid squad. I can't wait for the IPL to begin," he added.

Rahul, who recently lifted the Champions Trophy with India, will face his former side as Capitals open its campaign against Lucknow Super Giants on March 24.

"Excited for next 10 years of my career...": KL Rahul

Mumbai (Maharashtra)

Indian batter KL Rahul reflected on his career in international cricket, saying that it has been a "beautiful ride" and he is excited for next 10 years of his career, he wants to build on everything he has learned so far, continuing his evolution.

KL, who was speaking on JioHotstar's SuperStars programme, will be representing Delhi Capitals (DC) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) this season, starting with a match against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) from March 24 onwards at Visakhapatnam. He was let go by Lucknow Super Giants, a franchise he captained for three seasons from 2022-24 and he was roped in by DC for Rs 14 crores.

Speaking on his international journey so far, KL said, "It has been an incredible journey—what a privilege it is to represent my country and live my dream for so many years. Playing for India is something I aspired to do since childhood, and I feel extremely grateful and fortunate to have had this opportunity. The journey has been filled with challenges—there have been highs and lows, and I have experienced everything an athlete possibly can."

"But looking back, it has been a beautiful ride, and I would not want any other way. Now, I am excited for the next 10 years of my career. I want to build on everything I have learned in my first decade, apply that experience, and continue evolving. My focus is on improving every day, growing as a player, and winning more matches for my team," he added.

KL Rahul, who has played at multiple positions in the batting order, was

given the responsibility of number six, a role from which he was let go by Axar Patel at five, to give extra depth to the side during the ICC Champions Trophy winning campaign for India. Rahul played a crucial role in the middle, scoring a valuable 34* in 33 balls in a crunch situation during the final against New Zealand. In five matches and four innings, KL scored 140 runs at an average of 140.00 and a strike rate of 97.90, with the best score of 42*.

In 215 international matches, KL has made 8,565 runs at an average of 39.10, with 17 centuries and 57 fifties in 248 innings. His best score is 199. He excels most in ODIs, scoring 3,043 runs at an average of 49.08 and a strike rate of 88.17, with seven centuries and 18 fifties. His best score is 112. Talking about his preferred batting position, KL said that being a top-order batter comes natural to him and he feels comfortable doing it.

"I have grown up playing in the top order. From my first competitive match in Mangalore at the age of 11 to my early days playing for India, and for most of my career. That said, when you play a team sport, you do not always get to choose what you want. You have to be flexible and willing to adapt to the team's needs. Over the years, I have learned to embrace that and give my best in whichever role I am assigned," he added.

Despite his heroics at the top across all formats, KL has excelled at number five, majority in ODIs, scoring 1,299 runs in 31 innings at an average of 56.47, with two centuries and nine fifties. His best score is 112.

Union Sports Ministry puts Draft National Code Against Age Fraud in Sports

New Delhi

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports on Thursday put in the public domain the Draft National Code Against Age Fraud in Sports (NCAAFS) 2025 for inviting comments/suggestions from the general public and stakeholders, as part of the consultation process.

This addresses age fraud comprehensively, aiming to protect genuine athletes and uphold the integrity of sports competitions nationwide. This revision has been undertaken after almost 15 years, marking a significant update to the existing framework to ensure fair competition, ethical governance, and enhanced accountability in Indian sports, as per a press release from the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Ensure fair competition by preventing age fraud, which compromises the integrity of sports. Implement a robust verification system for age determination through a centralized database. Introduce strict penalties for athletes, coaches, and officials found guilty of falsifying age records. Enhance transparency and accountability in sports governance by aligning with international best practices.

Mandatory Age Verification & Digital Locking: All athletes must submit three mandatory documents during the registration process. Upon verification, the athlete's age will be securely recorded in a centralized digital database, permanently locking their verified age to prevent any future manipulations.

Medical Examination for Age Discrepancies: For cases involving age discrepancies, medical examinations will utilize the TW3 method, MRI scans, and general physical and dental examination. Further, AI-based bone



assessments to accurately determine an athlete's age will be done in pilot phase. Any disputes arising from these examinations may be appealed through a designated appellate medical panel for further review.

Uniform Penalties for Violations: Strict penalties will be enforced for age fraud violations. Athletes found guilty on the first violation will face a two-year ban from all competitions, along with forfeiture of any titles or medals won. A second violation will result in a lifetime ban and the initiation of legal proceedings under the penal code. Coaches and other officials found guilty will also face suspension and debarment from their roles.

Whistle-blower Mechanism: A secure and confidential platform will be created for stakeholders to report cases of age fraud anonymously. Additionally, a reward system will be implemented to encourage and incentivize whistle-blowers to come forward with genuine reports.

Amnesty Program for Self-Disclosure: A one-time amnesty window of six months will be provided, allowing

athletes to voluntarily declare their correct age without penalties. Athletes who participate in this amnesty program will undergo a performance review and subsequently be reassigned to the appropriate age group.

Two-Tier Appellate Mechanism: A two-tier appellate mechanism will handle disputes related to age determination. Athletes dissatisfied with initial medical examination findings may first appeal to the Regional Appellate Panel. If still unsatisfied, athletes may approach the Central Appeals Committee (CAC). The CAC's decision will be final and binding on all parties involved.

Role of Integrity/Compliance Officers: Integrity/Compliance Officers will be appointed by the National Sports Federations (NSFs) for each competition, and are responsible for ensuring strict adherence to the provisions of the Code. Their primary duties include verifying age-related documentation, overseeing the compliance process, identifying and preventing age fraud, and promptly reporting any violations.

Dedicated National Database: A dedicated, centralised digital portal linked with the National Sports Repository System (NSRS) will be established to securely store all age verification data of athletes. Special care will be taken to ensure that the personal data of minors is managed and protected in strict compliance with the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, ensuring lawful, fair, and transparent processing.

QR-Enabled ID Cards: Following successful verification, athletes will receive ID cards embedded with QR codes. These ID cards will be made accessible digitally through the DigLocker platform and must be presented mandatorily for participation in all sporting events.

Public Accountability & Transparency: A robust monitoring framework will be established to ensure effective implementation of the Code. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports will oversee compliance by requiring NSFs and the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to regularly submit detailed compliance reports, thereby ensuring accountability and adherence to established guidelines.

Draft NCAAFS will be applicable to all athletes, coaches, officials, administrators, and support personnel involved in recognized National Sports Federations (NSFs), Sports Authority of India (SAI), Sports Control Boards managed by Central Government departments and Central Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and NGOs, NSPOs, public/private agencies, and institutions promoting sports development.

The draft NCAAFS provides that States/UTs may either adopt this policy or use this as a model framework to develop their own policy for promoting uniformity nationwide.

India drawn in Group D with Indonesia, Denmark and England



Xiamen
The Indian badminton team is grouped alongside Indonesia, Denmark and England for the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Sudirman Cup Finals 2025 which will be held in Xiamen, China from April 27 to May 4.

The draws were announced on Thursday, as per Olympics.com. Sudirman Cup is an international mixed team competition held every two years.

Each tie in the competition features five matches, one each of men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles and mixed doubles.

A total of 16 teams will be taking part in the 19th edition of the tournament. Four seeded teams were placed in separate groups during the draw and defending champions and hosts China are top seeds in group A.

Indonesia, South Korea and Japan are seeded second, third and fourth, respectively.

The competing teams include defending champions, tournament hosts and top-performing sides in

“Hope that current federation will work honestly and will bring wrestling back on track”: Brij Bhushan Singh after revocation of ban on WFI



Asian and European mixed team continental championships. India made it to the Sudirman Cup 2025 based on their rankings. Winners from mixed team continental championships of Africa, Oceania and Pan America also secured their spots in the tournament. Furthermore, China qualified both as hosts and reigning champions, giving Asia an additional qualifying berth.

With 13 title wins, China is the most successful team in the Sudirman Cup history. South Korea have four titles while Indonesia have one title to their name.

India produced its best results in the Sudirman Cup in 2011 and 2017, reaching the quarterfinals. In the last edition, India was eliminated in the group stage, losing to Malaysia and Chinese Taipei.

BWF Sudirman Cup Finals 2025 draw: All groups-Group A: China, Hong Kong China, Thailand, Algeria-Group B: South Korea, Chinese Taipei, Canada, Czechia-Group C: Japan, Malaysia, France, Australia-Group D: India, Indonesia, Denmark, England.

"We do not have a budget, sponsor with us...": WFI official

New Delhi

Following the revocation of the suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), an official from the sport's governing body expressed hope that with the federation restored, they would get a sponsorship that would allow them to get a bigger place for their new office.

The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports on Tuesday lifted the suspension on the Wrestling Federation of India, restoring its recognition as a National Sports Federation (NSF) for the sport.

"As we said earlier that we do not have a budget and sponsor with us because the government imposed suspension on us so we only can manage this place with the budget left with us, but now when suspension is over from us so we hope that we can get sponsorship which help us to get new and big place for our office," an official said after the suspense was lifted.

The WFI office currently functions from Hari Nagar in Delhi.

The Sports Ministry had suspended the WFI body after the newly elected WFI president, Sanjay Singh, announced the hosting of the U-15 and U-20 nationals at Nandini Nagar in the Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh in December 2023.

Starting from 2023, several ace wrestlers like Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia spearheaded protests against WFI and its former president Brij Bhushan Singh, alleging him of sexual assault.

In August 2023, United World Wrestling (UWW) put a ban on WFI as it failed to organise elections within a stipulated time following accusations of sexual harassment and protests against ex-president Brij Bhushan Singh by top wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik. An ad hoc committee by the International Olympic Association (IOA) was put in place.

In late December 2023, elections were held, and Sanjay Singh was elected as the new president of WFI. However, the wrestlers protested against his election, saying he was an aide of ex-president Brij Bhushan Singh. Days after the elections, the Ministry suspended the federation again, a decision that came after Sanjay had announced the hosting of the U-15 and U-20 nationals at Nandini Nagar in the Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh by the end of the year.

India finishes Day 2 of Special Olympics World Winter Games with 5 medals, medal tally rises to 9

New Delhi

Building on their successful streak from the opening day, Indian athletes once again showcased outstanding performances on the second day of the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025. With two gold, two silver, and one bronze medal secured across two sporting disciplines on Wednesday, India's total medal count in the tournament has now reached nine, as per the Special Olympics Bharat press release.

Snowboarding, which brought India four medals on the opening day of the tournament, added two more accolades to the tally on Wednesday. Bharti (division P25) clinched a gold medal in the Novice Slalom Final, while Harshita Thakur (division F26) secured a bronze in the same event. This marks Bharti's second gold medal in the tournament, while Harshita had previously won a silver on the inaugural day.

The Indian contingent also made its mark in Alpine Skiing, securing one gold and two silver medals in the discipline. Nirmala Devi (division F06) clinched gold while Radha Devi (division F01) earned silver in the Intermediate Giant Slalom Final. Meanwhile, Abhishek Kumar, (division M02), claimed silver in the Novice Giant Slalom Final, further adding to India's impressive tally.

Anoop Kumar Sharma, India's head coach for Snowboarding, praised the athletes' efforts and performances in the tournament, stating, "We are extremely proud that our athletes have kicked off the Special Olympics World Winter Games campaign on such a successful note. We have already secured nine medals, six of them in Snowboarding. Their hard work is paying off, and they are determined to further boost this medal tally, aiming to break records and bring home a historic number of medals."

The Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025 featured over 1,500 athletes from 102 countries. While the total number of sporting disciplines being played at the tournament is eight, the Indian contingent is participating in six events: Snowboarding, Snowshoeing, Alpine Skiing, Speed Skating, Floorball and Cross Country Skiing.



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Joshua Kimmich commits future at Bayern Munich, signs contract extension till June 2029

Munich

Joshua Kimmich may sign a contract extension with FC Bayern Munich, which will keep him at the club until June 30, 2029, the club side's official website reported.

This summer will mark the 10-year anniversary of the 30-year-old at the club. During this period, Kimmich has won eight Bundesliga titles, the Champions League and the UEFA Club World Cup.

Kimmich joined Der Rekordmeister ahead of the 2015/16 season from VfB Stuttgart following a two-year spell at RB Leipzig. In 429 competitive appearances for Bayern Munich, he has scored 43 goals and registered 115 assists.

Various reports suggested that Kimmich's time in Germany was nearing its end, with FC Barcelona and Arsenal among the clubs showcasing their interest in acquiring the defensive midfielder.

However, his recent contract extension will keep him with Germany's top side. After signing the contract extension, Kimmich revealed the reason behind his decision.

"At FC Bayern I have the best environment to achieve my sporting goals. That is what my decision was based on. For me at the moment, there is no better package of team-mates, coaching



staff and club environment in order to achieve maximum success. I feel at home here, and I am not finished yet," Kimmich said in a statement released by the club.

Herbert Hainer, FC Bayern president, expressed his delight on Kimmich's contract extension and said, "Congratulations to our sporting management and our board. FC Bayern needs players who not only bear the shirt but also responsibility - on and off the pitch. And Joshua Kimmich is one of those players."

Jan-Christian Dreesen, CEO, added, "We are delighted that Joshua Kimmich

will continue his journey at FC Bayern. He is someone who always leads from the front, be it at the club or as Germany captain. His hunger is unbroken, as we saw again in the Champions League round of 16. His determination and his commitment embody what FC Bayern stand for. He should be the bridge between our current generation and a new era."

In the international circuit, Kimmich has 97 caps for the German national team since his debut in May 2016. He netted seven goals and wore the captain's armband for his country last year.

Young Jyoti Singh shares her senior debut experience at FIH Hockey Pro League

New Delhi

Jyoti Singh made her senior India debut at the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024/25 (Women). The 20-year-old played in four of India's matches, including their remarkable win against World No. 1, the Netherlands.

"Listening to the national anthem echo in the stadium when I made my debut was truly a special feeling that I will never forget. My overall experience was very good, especially our win over the Netherlands on the last day. It felt good to help the team achieve something big surrounded by all the senior players," she said, as quoted from Hockey India.

Talking about the events leading up to her first game, she said, "I got to know that I was debuting against Spain the night before the match. I had butterflies in my stomach and couldn't sleep. The senior players



helped me calm down the next morning at breakfast." "Sushila Chatur (di) told me to play freely and that there was no

pressure on me and that the senior players would support me. Savita di told me to not take any risks and just listen to her throughout the match.

This really stuck with me and helped me in the tournament," she added.

Jyoti had just returned from the Hockey India League season with Delhi SG Pipers when she learned she had made the senior squad.

"I didn't expect to be selected so soon. We had started preparing for senior nationals when I got to know. I called my parents to inform them, and they were very happy," she said.

Jyoti's sporting roots are engraved in her family. Her father, Dheeraj Singh, is a former athlete and has represented India internationally. He introduced her to sports when she used to go running with him in her early years. Jyoti's connection with Hockey, however, began through her cousin, Anuja Singh, who currently plays for Central Railways.

"My cousin used to play hockey. When she used to come home during summer vacation, I used to feel

like playing hockey after hearing about it from her. So in 2015, I held the stick for the first time when I went to the same academy (MP Women Hockey Academy, Gwalior) as her," she said.

Talking about her game, Jyoti said, "I need to be quicker. Playing the HIL and the Pro League has made me realise that I need to be faster to keep up with the international attackers. I also need to feed the ball better, something that Sushila di does very well. I look up to her since she is a very experienced defender. The way she works and guides other players from the back is really inspiring."

Before this, Jyoti first became the Captain of the junior squad and led her side to a gold medal at the Junior Women's Asia Cup in December of last year. Now, Jyoti has returned to junior camp and is set on winning another medal for her country.



Alia Bhatt to make her Cannes debut in 2025

After dazzling at the Met Gala last year, star Alia Bhatt is now gearing up for yet another milestone on the international stage. The 'Raazi' actress has officially confirmed that she will be making her debut at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival 2025, joining the Indian icons who have graced the red carpet in previous years.

Bollywood actress confirmed that she will be

Ranbir Kapoor confirms 'Brahmastra 2' is in the works

As Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor, who joined her in the celebrations. Dressed in an elegant pastel kurta, Alia cut a beautifully decorated birthday cake as Ranbir playfully smeared some on her nose before giving her a sweet kiss. The couple then posed for pictures with the paparazzi, creating a heartwarming moment for their fans. However, beyond the celebrations, Ranbir Kapoor took the opportunity to share significant updates on his upcoming films, including Ayan Mukerji's 'Brahmastra: Part Two - Dev' and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Love & War'. Talking about the much-anticipated second instalment of the 'Brahmastra' trilogy, Ranbir confirmed that the film is very much in the pipeline. "Brahmastra 2 is something that Ayan has been nurturing as a dream for a very long time—Brahmastra, the entire story of Brahmastra.

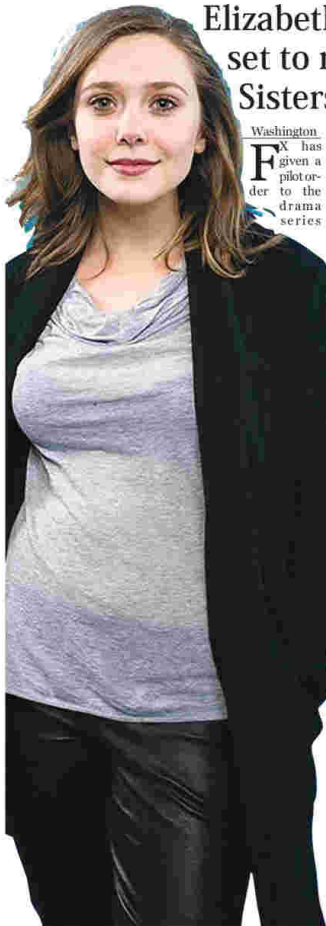
making her debut at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival 2025, joining the Indian icons who have graced the red carpet in previous years. During a recent media interaction in Mumbai, Alia shared the exciting news, saying, "I am looking forward to it." The 78th Cannes Film Festival, which will take place from May 13 to May 24, 2025, has long been a celebrated event for Indian stars. Over the years, personalities like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Deepika Padukone, and Sonam Kapoor have been regular attendees. Now, Alia is set to add her name to this illustrious list. Alia made a stunning debut at the 2024 Met Gala, where she captivated audiences in a breathtaking Sabyasachi saree. The pastel-hued ensemble, adorned with intricate embellishments and featuring a dramatic 23-foot-long train, paid homage to her Indian heritage while embracing a modern, global aesthetic. The announcement came as Alia celebrated an early birthday with the press ahead of her 32nd birthday on March 15. She was joined by her husband, actor Ranbir Kapoor, as she cut a cake and posed for pictures with the paparazzi.



We are putting together a team: Aamir Khan on 'Mahabharata' movie



Aclaimed actor and producer Aamir Khan has often spoken about his long-held dream of making a film on the Mahabharata. And Khan recently confirmed that he is putting together a team for the same. Speaking during a media interaction ahead of his birthday on Thursday, Khan said, "We are just starting with the writing process. We are putting together a team. We are still fleshing out stuff, so let's see how that goes." The actor had earlier told Galatta Plus that he was a little scared to make the movie, "When you are making a film on Mahabharat, you are not just making a film. You are performing a yagna. It is not just a film, it is so much more. And that is why I am not ready for it yet. I am scared of bringing it out. Mahabharat will never let you down, but you may let down Mahabharat." Khan also said that he, director Rajkumar Santosh and Salman Khan have been talking about a sequel to their cult classic, Andaz Apna Apna. The topic was brought up during Khan's birthday bash. Aamir Khan, who turns a year older on March 14, last appeared in the Forrest Gump remake, Laal Singh Chaddha, which failed to connect with the audience.



Elizabeth Olsen, Sean Durkin set to reunite for 'Seven Sisters' drama pilot

Fox has given a pilot order to the drama series 'Seven Sisters', starring Elizabeth Olsen, with Sean Durkin set to direct. According to Deadline, the project, which comes from executive producers Will Arbery, Durkin, and Garrett Basch, marks a reunion for Olsen and Durkin, who previously collaborated on the award-winning 2011 film 'Martha Marcy May Marlene'. In 'Seven Sisters', Olsen plays a sister who begins communicating with a voice no one else can hear, forcing her large, tight-knit family to confront long-buried secrets. The pilot, written by Arbery, is produced by FX Productions and marks Basch's fifth series for the network, following 'Devs', 'Reservation Dogs', 'What We Do in the Shadows', and the upcoming 'Tulsa' noir drama starring Ethan Hawke. Olsen, who is set to star alongside Alicia Vikander in Fleur Fortune's feature directorial debut 'The Assessment', as well as Miles Teller and Callum Turner in the A24 romantic comedy 'Eternity', which she also executive produces, is currently in production on the Warner Bros thriller 'Panic Carefully' opposite Julia Roberts. Arbery, a playwright and screenwriter from Texas, is known for his work on HBO's 'Succession', for which he won the WGA Award for Episodic Drama. He has also co-written the screenplay for the upcoming film 'Sacrifice', directed by Romain Gavras and starring Chris Evans and Anya Taylor-Joy. Durkin, who most recently wrote, directed, and produced 'The Iron Claw' for A24, is set to adapt and direct 'Deep Cuts', which will star Saoirse Ronan and Austin Butler.

Daniel Craig in talks to join Greta Gerwig's 'Chronicles of Narnia' movie

Netflix is reportedly aiming high as it begins casting for its highly anticipated 'Chronicles of Narnia' film, with sources revealing that Daniel Craig has been offered a role in the upcoming adaptation. Although it is still early in the deal-making process, the potential casting marks an exciting development for the film, which is being directed by Greta Gerwig, according to Deadline. While it remains uncertain whether Craig will ultimately join the project, the actor has reportedly received an offer, sparking excitement among fans. The specifics of Craig's role in the movie are not yet clear. As per Deadline, sources have emphasized that discussions are in the early stages, and it is still un-

Ranbir, Alia request paparazzi to not click daughter Raha's pictures

In the aftermath of the attack on Saif Ali Khan at his residence early this year, Bollywood star couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt on Thursday requested the media not to click photos of their daughter Raha. In an intimate meet-and-greet with the media days ahead of Alia's birthday on March 15, the actors said they want to ensure the safety of their two-year-old child. "It might sound like a privilege problem, but as parents, we are trying to protect our child and we will do whatever we can. Today, everybody who has a phone, can post anything, and that can spread like wildfire, so that's not in our control. You (paparazzi) are like our family, so we can only request you, and you can help us achieve that," Ranbir told reporters here. When asked if the 'Animal' star would take action against those who do not comply with their request, he replied in the negative. "I was born in Mumbai, and you all are family; it's not that we will take the legal route. Whenever we request you (media) or we give what you guys want (referring to pictures), we give our word to each other. It's not like we will file the case," he said. "We don't want to push

and someone had clicked a photograph from someone else's building, so that's a wrong thing. It's a line you can't cross; you can't shoot us in our house. "I understand we are actors and there's some kind of curiosity about an actor's life, but there's a line that you cannot cross. Beyond that, you all are respectful, and we both have known you for so many years," he said. At the event, Alia also cut a birthday cake in the presence of the media. "The privacy of celebrity children has been a topic of discussion in the era of social media. According to reports, Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan — who is Ranbir's cousin — also asked the paparazzi to not click photos of her sons — Taimur and Jehan — after her husband Saif was injured multiple times in a knife attack by an intruder in January.

against those who do not comply with their request, he replied in the negative. "I was born in Mumbai, and you all are family; it's not that we will take the legal route. Whenever we request you (media) or we give what you guys want (referring to pictures), we give our word to each other. It's not like we will file the case," he said. "We don't want to push



known whether Craig will officially sign on. Greta Gerwig, known for her success with films like 'Lady Bird' and 'Little Women,' is set to direct and adapt C.S. Lewis' beloved 'Chronicles of Narnia' series for the big screen. This project is poised to be a fresh take on the classic fantasy saga. Production is set to begin later this year, though additional details about the film remain scarce. In addition to Craig, there are reports that singer Charli XCX is in talks for the role of the 'White Witch,' a central character in the Narnia universe, according to Deadline. As previously reported, Netflix's adaptation will bring the world of Narnia back to life, with the 'White Witch' playing a pivotal role in the storyline.